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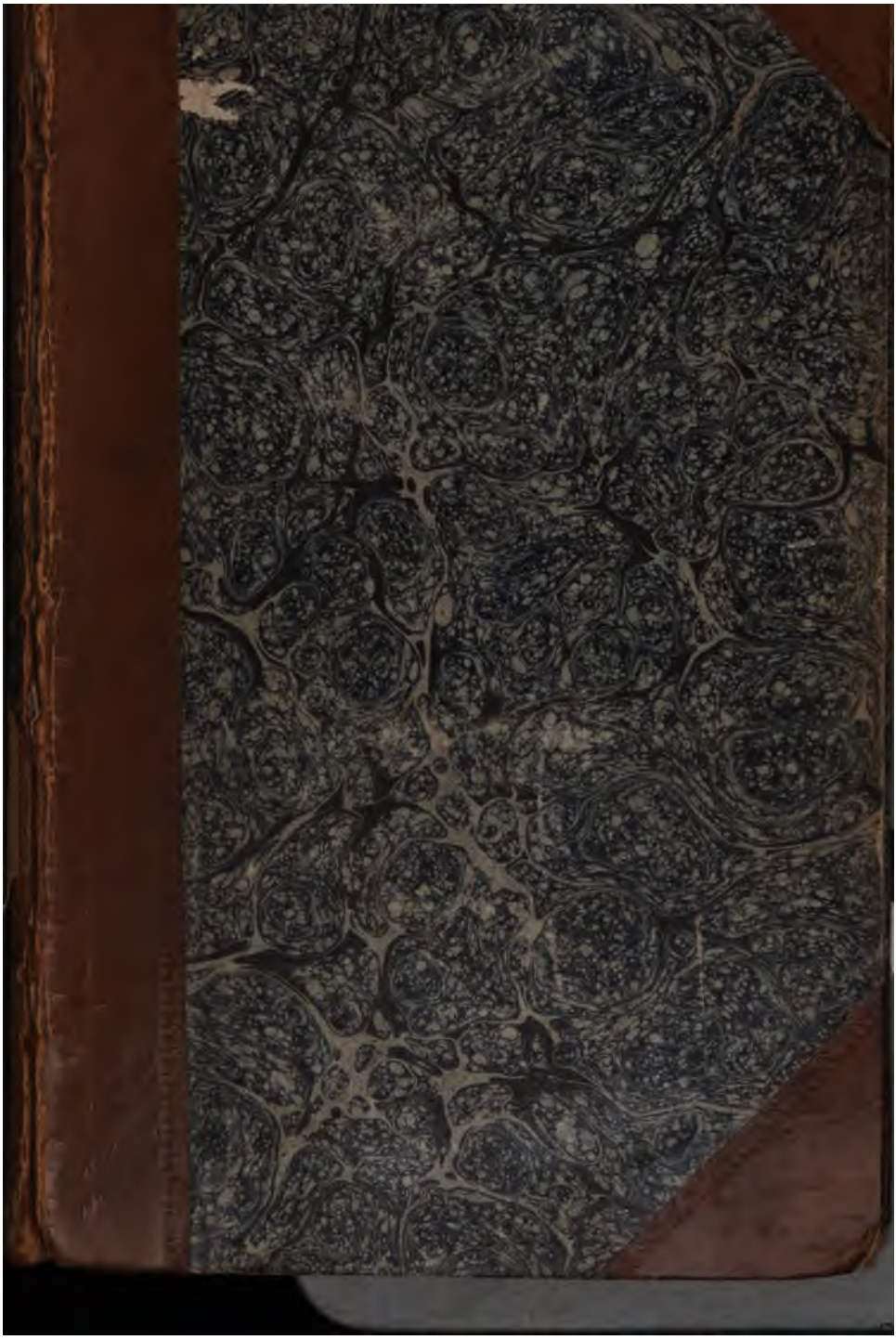

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THE TRUE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST ASSERTED.

Wherein is ſhewn what is, and what is not that Goſpel; what was the great and good end it was intended to ſerve; how it is excellently ſuited to anſwer that purpoſe; and how, or by what means that end has in a great meaſure been fruſtrated.

Humbly offered to publick conſideration, and in particular to all thoſe who eſteem themſelves, or are eſteemed by others to be Miniſters of *Jeſus Chriſt*, and Preachers of his Goſpel; and more eſpecially to all thoſe who have obtained the reputation of being the great Defenders of Chriſtianity.

By *THOMAS CHUBB.*

Acts xvii. 6. *They drew Jaſon, and certain brethren, unto the rulers of the city, crying, Theſe that have turned the world upſide down, are come hither alſo.*

To which is added

A Short Diſſertation on PROVIDENCE.

LONDON:
Printed for THO. COX, at the *Lamb* under the *Royal-Exchange.*
MDCCXXXVIII.

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THE AUTHOR TO HIS READERS.

SIRS, *I have in the following tract ſhewn you what was the* great end, *and the* profeſſed deſign *of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt's coming into the world; and of what he did, and ſuffered in it, from it, and for it,* viz. *to* ſave mens ſouls. *I have likewiſe ſhewn you what* method *Chriſt took, and the* means *he made uſe of in order to obtain that end. And in the doing of this I have alſo ſhewn you what is* ſtrictly *and* properly *the* true goſpel *of Jeſus Chriſt, or what is that* good news *which he was ſent of*

God to acquaint the world with. And as there has been of late great complaining of the growth of infidelity, *and of the bold attacks made by Unbelievers upon Chriſtianity, and of the idleneſs, weakneſs, and unfairneſs of what has been urged on that head; and as many other perſons have been engaged in its defence (tho' poſſibly what has been urged in favour of Chriſtianity, may have been, in many inſtances, as idle and weak as what has been urged againſt it): ſo from your peruſal of the annexed treatiſe you will be better qualified to diſcern whether the* main points *in diſpute, and the* chief *and* principal things *contended for, and againſt, be* real Chriſtianity *and the* true goſpel *of Chriſt; or whether they be not rather and in the main the* doctrines *and* commandments, *and the* intereſt *and* power *of* men, *which ſome zealouſly oppoſe, and others as zealouſly defend. Alas! there is ſometimes*

times great zeal pretended to be ſhewn for Chriſtianity, when there is juſt ground to preſume that the true goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt is leaſt at heart. Mens worldly poſſeſſions, *their* power *and* pre-eminence *are what they value, and think worth contending for; and that ſuch contention may appear with the better grace Chriſtianity is brought in to countenance it. But let this be as it will.*

What is contained in the following tract the whole body of mankind are manifeſtly intereſted in; and this has induced me to offer it to publick conſideration. I do likewiſe particularly recommend it to the ſerious conſideration of all thoſe who eſteem themſelves, or are eſteemed by others to be miniſters *of Jeſus Chriſt, and* preachers *of his goſpel. And the reaſon of this is, becauſe the ſubject of it, as it enters into thoſe important queſtions, viz.* what is, *and* what is not *the true goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt, is what they as preachers*

of Chriſt and his goſpel are particularly intereſted in, and if it ſhould appear to be erroneous, are particularly concerned to refute. I do alſo beg leave more eſpecially to recommend it to the conſideration of all thoſe who have obtained the reputation of being the great Defenders *of* Chriſtianity ; *becauſe, I think, they are more eſpecially concerned to examine it, in order to ſee whether it has been* real *and* true Chriſtianity *they have been engaged in the defence of, or not. And,*

As I have purſued this work with the utmoſt fairneſs *and* freedom, *and with a ſtrict regard to* truth *wherever it might lead me, or whomſoever I might oppoſe by it, and under a well grounded perſwaſion, and with a ſerious regard to a* future judgment *and* retribution : *ſo I intreat my* Examiners *to do the like, and then, I doubt not, but what is here offered will appear in a different light, and have a different*

effect

effect upon their minds than otherwiſe it would have. I do likewiſe intreat my readers to conſider that to look upon a future judgment and retribution only as a proper topick for argument; as ſomething that has upon the foot of reaſon more to be ſaid for it, than can be ſaid againſt it; as ſomething we are obliged to revelation for the certainty of (tho' I think that is a miſtake); as a ſubject which affords matter for a man handſomely to harangue half an hour in a pulpit upon, and the like, is one thing; *and for a man to pay ſuch a ſerious regard to it, as that it becomes a ground or reaſon of action to him, which rightly directs and governs his mind and life, this is quite* another thing. *And yet, where the latter of theſe is wanting, there* faith *is the ſame as* infidelity *with reſpect to any good purpoſe that is ſerved by it. Alas! a future judgment and retribution ſeem to be things rather to be* talked *and*

boaſted *of, than to be a ground or reaſon of* action, *or to be* ſeriouſly regarded *by Chriſtians. Tho', I hope, this will not be the caſe of my Examiner; for if it ſhould, I fear, I ſhall come but poorly off.*

I have in the following ſheets ſhewn what are the true grounds of our acceptance *with* God; *and likewiſe what are the true grounds upon which ſinners may reaſonably expect to obtain the* divine mercy; *and theſe ſurely muſt be allowed to be points in which all mankind are nearly concerned. I have likewiſe in the following tract rendered the goſpel of Chriſt* defendable *upon* rational principles, *by ſeparating from it thoſe things which have been* blended *with it, and which thereby have laid a foundation for moſt of thoſe* difficulties *and* objections *which have been urged againſt it. And yet, notwithſtanding, (ſuch is the humour of the age,) I may poſſibly be deemed, and repreſented as an* Unbeliever,

and

and an enemy *to that goſpel; than which ſurely nothing can be more* unjuſt, *or* ungenerous. *However, I will ſo far intereſt myſelf in the cauſe of* unbelievers, (*if any ſuch there are among us,*) *as to ſay, they ought to have* juſtice *done them; and if they have any thing to offer againſt Chriſtianity as the* ground *of their infidelity, they ought to be heard and anſwered in the* ſpirit *of the goſpel of Chriſt, which is a ſpirit of* meekneſs, forbearance *and* love. *I am ſenſible the common cry is, that it is not mens perceiving any difficulties which attend the divinity of the Chriſtian Revelation, but it is their* love *to their* vices *which is the ground and cauſe of their infidelity; though this is a preſumption which, I think, does not appear to be well grounded. For if a man be diſpoſed to follow his vicious inclinations, without any* diſturbance from others *or* reluctancy in

his own mind; *then certainly he is moſt ſecure of this, by his ſtrictly adhering, with regard to his opinions, to the* eſtabliſhed *religion of his Country, let that be what it will, and not to deviate from it in any point. For then as he may be as vicious as he pleaſes without rendering himſelf* remarkable, *or drawing on him the* watchful eyes *of others: ſo it is but to* ſtrain *the ſenſe of the Revelation publickly adhered to, and he may find out ſeveral ways to render the* practice *of vice eaſy to himſelf. This has been too much, and too often the caſe amongſt Chriſtians; many of them by applying to themſelves the virtue and merit of a* ſtrong faith, *or by a* warm zeal *for a party, (which they are apt to conſider as contending for truth and true religion,) or by a conſtant attendance on ſome* external obſervances, *or by the application of the* good works, *or* ſufferings *of ſome*

other

other perſon or perſons to themſelves, or the like, have rendered their minds eaſy *under the practice of the vileſt actions. And as ſuch principles introduce into mens minds a groundleſs peace and ſatisfaction, even whilſt they indulge themſelves in a vicious courſe of life: ſo thoſe principles are uſually grounded upon the* miſtaken *ſenſe, or the* miſapplication *of ſome part or parts of the Chriſtian Revelation. Whereas if a man* diſſents *from the* eſtabliſhed *religion of his country, and becomes an* Unbeliever; *then every* watchful eye *is turned upon him, and* every fault *in his conduct is as it were* regiſtered in a book, *and remembered againſt him upon all occaſions. And as reaſon or the religion of nature diſapproves and condemns* every vice: *ſo if the Unbeliever reflects ſeriouſly upon his actions after the commiſſion of them, he muſt ſtand condemned in his* own mind, *and has no ſanctuary*

to fly to, to render that weight and burden eaſy to himſelf. And if a man does not reflect ſeriouſly upon his actions, then as he has no reluctancy of mind: *ſo the caſe is the ſame whether he be a* Believer, *or an* Unbeliever. *And as I have thus far intereſted myſelf in the cauſe of Unbelievers: ſo I beg leave to obſerve* one thing *to them,* viz. *that the ſtarting a* few difficulties *is not a* rational, *and therefore is not a* ſufficient ground *for ſetting aſide the Chriſtian, or any Revelation, if what is offered in its favour carries with it the* greater *and* higher degree *of* probability. *When any queſtion admits of a diſpute, common juſtice requires that every thing ſhould be brought into the caſe which makes either for, or againſt that queſtion; and wherever upon a fair compariſon, the* greater *and* higher degree *of* probability *lies, that ought in reaſon to determine our judgments either* for, *or* againſt *that queſtion.*

THE

THE TRUE GOSPEL OF *JESUS CHRIST* ASSERTED.

SECTION I.

THE *great end* and the *profeſſed deſign* of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt as to his coming into the world, and with reſpect to what he has revealed to it, performed in it, and ſuffered from it, and for it is manifeſtly and apparently this, *viz.* to *ſave mens ſouls*; that is, it is to prepare men for, and to inſure to them the *favour* of *God*, and their *happineſs* in another world, and to prevent them from bringing *great* and *laſting miſery* upon themſelves. And that this is the truth of the caſe is moſt evident from Chriſt's own repeated declarations concerning this matter. *Matth.* xviii. 11. *For the ſon of man is come to ſave that which was loſt.* Luke ix. 56.

For

For the ſon of man is not come to deſtroy mens lives, but to ſave them. Chap. xix. 10. *For the ſon of man is come to ſeek and to ſave that which was loſt.* John iii. 16, 17. *For God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotten ſon; that whoſoever believeth in him, ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting life. For God ſent not his ſon into the world to condemn the world; but that the world thro' him might be ſaved.* Chap. v. 24. *Verily, verily I ſay unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that ſent me, hath everlaſting life, and ſhall not come into condemnation: but hath paſſed from death unto life.* Chap. vi. 40. *And this is the will of him that ſent me, that every one which ſeeth the ſon, and believeth on him, may have everlaſting life: and I will raiſe him up at the laſt day.* Chap. x. 10. *I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.* Chap. xii. 47. *And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not; for I am not come to judge the world, but to ſave it.* From theſe and ſuch like declarations which *Chriſt* has made, it is moſt evident and apparent, not only that men by their vices and wickedneſs had rendered themſelves *unworthy* of *God's favour*, and had expoſed themſelves to his *juſt diſpleaſure*; but alſo that the *great end* and the *profeſſed deſign* which Chriſt came into the world to proſecute was to procure their

their *ſalvation*; which in other words is the ſame as to ſay, that his great end and deſign was to prepare men for, and to inſure to them the *favour* of *God*, and their *happineſs* in another world; and to prevent them from being *greatly* and *laſtingly miſerable*. And,

As this was the main or chief end which Chriſt came into the world to proſecute; ſo in conſequence thereof, and thereby in a ſecondary and leſs proper ſenſe, he may be ſaid to come into the world to promote and ſecure the *preſent well-being* of mankind; namely, to lead men to *preſent pleaſure*, and to ſecure them from *preſent miſery*, as the pleaſures and pains of this world, are generally *connected* with the pleaſures and pains of another; that is, what fits and prepares a man for future felicity, generally *tends* to make him eaſy and happy here; and what expoſes a man to the miſeries of another world, generally *tends* to make him unhappy and miſerable in this. And in this view of the caſe Chriſtianity may as truly be ſaid to be ſubſervient to mens *preſent* as to their *future* well-being; not by inveſting any Chriſtian with any *temporal power* or *juriſdiction* over his brethren or fellow Chriſtians out of which his preſent good or temporal advantage might ariſe; but only by engaging each and every individual to put on *ſuch* a

temper

temper of mind, and *ſuch* a behaviour as renders each perſon a *bleſſing* to *himſelf*, and to *ſociety*, and from which temper and behaviour the *preſent temporal good* of each individual generally flows. Chriſtianity was not intended, and therefore it has made no proviſion for the inveſting any *Chriſtian*, nor any *ſet*, or *order*, or *body of men* amongſt Chriſtians with any the *leaſt degree of temporal power* or *wealth*, any otherways than as it engages each individual in the practice of that *virtue* which may render him worthy to be intruſted with the *former* in civil ſociety, and as it leads him to that *diligence induſtry* and *frugality* which is productive of the *latter*. And,

As the grand deſign of Chriſt and the Chriſtian revelation is to promote the future good and being of mankind, and not the preſent intereſt of any perſon, but only as the latter is connected with, and naturally flows from the former: ſo whenever the *name* or the *revelation* of Chriſt is made uſe of to ſupport and carry on the *temporal intereſt* of any Chriſtian, or any ſet, or order, or body of men among Chriſtians, by inveſting them with any the leaſt degree of *temporal power* out of which their *preſent intereſt* might ariſe, this is manifeſtly an *abuſe* of the name and of the revelation of Chriſt, by making theſe ſubſervient to other, and contrary

contrary purpoſes than what they were intended. I would not be underſtood to mean that Chriſtians as Chriſtians have not a right to make uſe of the name and the revelation of Chriſt by way of *argument* or *motive* in order to perſwade and engage each other to the practice of *juſtice gratitude* and *benevolence* out of which the temporal good of many Chriſtians muſt ariſe, there being in theſe caſes no temporal power or juriſdiction at all; but what I intend is that no Chriſtian conſidered as a Chriſtian, and by virtue of his being ſuch, has any *coercive power* or *juriſdiction* over the *perſons* or *properties* of any other Chriſtians, ſo as to have a right *forcibly* to oblige them to any thing, or to *mulct* or *puniſh* them for their non-compliance, Chriſt not having *delegated* any ſuch power; and when, or wherever it has been claimed and exerciſed it has been *ſubverſive* of the great end and purpoſe of his coming, and of his preaching and miniſtry; that is, it has been *injurious* to the *preſent* and *future happineſs* of mankind.

To *believe in*, and to ſubmit to be *governed* by the *laws* of Chriſt, is what, and what alone conſtitutes a *Chriſtian*; and it is this which *contracts* the relation betwixt Chriſt and his people. Whoever therefore believes in, and ſubmits to be governed by the laws of Chriſt, by this he becomes a Chriſtian or

a member of the body of Chriſt; and he is *more* or *leſs* a Chriſtian, or rather he is a *better* or a *worſer* Chriſtian as he *more* or *leſs* ſubmits himſelf to be *governed* by *Chriſt's laws*; and when he throws up *all ſubjection* to the laws of Chriſt and *refuſes* to be governed by them, he then ceaſes to be a Chriſtian or a member of the body of Chriſt, let his profeſſions and pretenſions be what they will. Chriſt ſtands to his people in the relation of a *governour*, as he was appointed and ſent of God to declare to men what that *rule* of *action* is which they are to govern their *tempers* and *behaviours* by, and which will render them *pleaſing* to their maker; and as he is appointed their *judge* to call them to an account for their actions, and to *reward* or *puniſh* them in another world according as they have behaved themſelves in this; and it is mens *ſubjecting* themſelves to *Chriſt*, that is, to that *law* of *reaſon* or *rule* of *righteouſneſs* which Chriſt ſpecially requires their compliance with, that contracts the *relation* betwixt him and them, and which denominates him to be their *head*, that is, their governour; and they to be his *body*, that is, his ſubjects or people. So that Chriſtians as Chriſtians have no *other head*, that is, they have no other authoritative power or governour over them, but their *one common head* or governour *viz. Chriſt Jeſus our Lord*;

and

and they have no other *law*, conſidered as Chriſtians, but the laws of *Chriſt* to direct their behaviour by. And,

As a Chriſtian conſidered as ſuch, is ſubjected only to the *laws* of *Chriſt:* ſo he is only *anſwerable* to *Chriſt*, and not to any Chriſtian, nor to any ſet, or order, or body of men among Chriſtians for the *breach* of them. Chriſt is conſtituted to be, not only the *ſole lawgiver*, but alſo the *ſole judge* of the behaviour of his people; and therefore his people are only anſwerable *to him* for the breach of his laws. And though the laws of Chriſt require the performance of *relative* and other duties; yet Chriſt hath not *inveſted* any Chriſtian, nor any body of men among Chriſtians with a *right* to call any of his people to an account for the breach of his laws, ſo as to have a right to *correct* and *puniſh* them for their non-compliance. I would not be underſtood to mean that Chriſtians as Chriſtians have not a right to *reprove* and *admoniſh* one another with reſpect to their breach of the law of Chriſt, and to make uſe of all proper methods by way of *argument* and *perſwaſion*, in order to bring the tranſgreſſors of Chriſt's laws to repentance and reformation of their evil ways, there being in ſuch caſes no temporal power or juriſdiction at all; but what I intend is that as Chriſt is conſtituted the ſole judge of the

actions of his people, ſo it is his *peculiar prerogative* to puniſh them for the breach of his laws. The *ſanctions* annexed to, and which are deſigned to inforce *obedience* to the laws of Chriſt are not the pleaſures and pains of *this world*, but the happineſs and miſery of *another*; and Chriſt will in his *own perſon*, at the proper time, *viz.* at the *day of judgment*, call his people to an account for their behaviour and will reward or puniſh them according as they ſhall have acted agreeably with, or contrary to thoſe laws. I ſay, that the ſanctions annexed to the laws of Chriſt are not the pleaſures and pains of this world, any otherways than as our obedience or diſobedience to Chriſt's laws is of itſelf and by its own natural tendency *ſubſervient* to our preſent happineſs or miſery. And therefore, if any *Chriſtian*, or any *body* of men among Chriſtians ſhould take upon him, or them to inflict any *temporal* puniſhment upon any of their fellow Chriſtians, for their breach of any of the laws of Chriſt, conſidered as the laws of Chriſt; this is plainly to *invert* the order of things, by annexing *other* and *contrary ſanctions* to the laws of Chriſt than he has annexed to them; by *judging* and *puniſhing before the time*; and by the *members* aſſuming an *authority*, and exerciſing a *power* which peculiarly belongs to *Chriſt* their *head*. And,

As

As believing in, and ſubmitting to be governed by the laws of Chriſt is what alone conſtitutes a Chriſtian: ſo in this every perſon is, and muſt be a *voluntier*, it not being in the power of any man, nor any ſet, or order, or body of men to *believe in*, and *obey* the laws of Chriſt, in, and by, or for the *perſon of another*. Neither can any man, or body of men *force faith* or *ſubjection*, in, and from the perſon of another; ſeeing faith is, and muſt be the produce of *conviction*, and obedience to the laws of Chriſt muſt be *voluntary*, for otherways it is not, neither can it be *Chriſtian obedience*. To perform an action which the law of Chriſt requires, becauſe the *law* of the *ſtate*, or any *human* judicial power requires the performance of the ſame action, and becauſe the law of the ſtate, or ſuch judicial power *threatens*, and will *puniſh* our diſobedience; this is not obedience to the laws of Chriſt, but only to the *law* of the *ſtate*, or to ſuch *human* judicial power as required, and was the ground of that obedience. And as every Chriſtian is and muſt be a voluntier, for otherways he is not ſtrictly and properly a Chriſtian: ſo he is ſuch *independent* of the will and determination of any Chriſtian, or any order, of men among Chriſtians; it not being in their power to make him *ſo*, or to make him *otherways*. I would not be underſtood to

mean, that it is not in the power of any one man by *argument*, by *perſwaſion*, by *example* and the like to *incourage* and *invite* men to a *compliance* with the laws of Chriſt, or to *lead* or *draw them off* from their *ſubjection* to him; but what I mean is that as every Chriſtian is and muſt be ſuch voluntarily and of his own choice, in oppoſition to the will or choice of any other perſon or perſons who may be ſuppoſed to chuſe for him; ſo he is ſuch independently, that is, it does not depend upon the will and pleaſure of any other perſon or perſons whether he ſhall be a *Chriſtian*, or *not*, it not being in the power of any perſon or perſons to *chriſtianize*, or *unchriſtianize* a man as they pleaſe, but it depends upon every man's *own pleaſure*, (in oppoſition to *all others* who may be ſuppoſed to chuſe for him, or force him, or determine againſt him,) whether he will obey the laws of Chriſt, or not; and conſequently whether he will be a Chriſtian, or not. And,

As the relation betwixt Chriſt and his people is contracted by their believing in, and ſubmitting to be governed by his laws; ſo the ſame thing contracts the relation of *brotherhood* betwixt one Chriſtian and another. Men do not in this caſe become related to *Chriſt* by their relation to, and union with *each other*; but on the contrary they become related to *each other* only and wholly by their union

union with, and their relation to *Chriſt*. So that brotherhood in the preſent caſe does not ariſe from, nor depend upon the will and pleaſure of any or *all* the members of that body; but wholly and ſolely upon *each one's* relation to the *head Chriſt*; he being the *center* of unity to the whole. And though any particular ſociety among Chriſtians may *excommunicate*, that is, *exclude* any individual from being a member of that particular ſociety, and thereby *diſown* their brotherly relation to him as a Chriſtian: yet this does not *deſtroy* that relation, nor make him *leſs* a Chriſtian than he was before; becauſe his relation to *Chriſt*, and to *them* as a Chriſtian brother in conſequence thereof does not ariſe from, nor depend upon their *opinion* of him, nor their *behaviour* towards him, but only by his *believing in*, and ſubmitting to be *governed* by Chriſt's *laws*, which ſuch acts of excommunication does not affect at all. And,

As Chriſtians ſtand to each other in the relation of *brethren only*, and not in the relation of *maſters* and *ſervants* to each other, conſidered as Chriſtians: ſo there is no ſuch thing as *greater* or *leſs* among Chriſtians, conſidered as ſuch, any otherways than as the Chriſtian revelation has a *greater* or *leſs influence* upon their minds and lives, and thereby the *end* and *purpoſe* of that revelation is *more* or *leſs* anſwered upon them. For tho'

one Chriſtian may by his being called to perform ſome *good offices* towards his fellow Chriſtians (ſuch as to *teach* and *admoniſh* them and the like), or by his being intruſted with *ſuperior abilities* to ſerve his fellow Chriſtians, than ſome other Chriſtians may be called to, or be entruſted with; I ſay, tho' this may enable one Chriſtian to be *more uſeful* and *ſerviceable* to his fellow Chriſtians than other Chriſtians are capable of being; yet this does not give thoſe who are called to any office in a Chriſtian ſociety, or who are intruſted with ſuperior abilities to ſerve it any *power*, *authority*, *juriſdiction* or *pre-eminence* over their fellow Chriſtians; but on the contrary they ſtand to them in *theſe circumſtances* only as *brethren* in Chriſt Jeſus; that is, they are upon a foot of *perfect equality* in theſe reſpects. And therefore though Chriſt and his revelation may be truly ſaid to be ſubſervient to the *preſent* happineſs of mankind; yet it is not by his inveſting any *Chriſtian*, nor any *ſet*, or *order*, or *body of men* among Chriſtians with a *right* of *dominion* over the *perſons* or *properties* of their brethren out of which their *preſent* intereſt might ariſe (he not having made any *ſuch inveſtiture*); but it is by his engaging his diſciples and followers to be *wiſe* and *good* men, upon which their *own* preſent happineſs, and their beneficialneſs to *ſociety* does apparently depend.

This,

This, I ſay, is the ſtate of Chriſt's Church and people at *preſent*, even before his *ſecond coming*. He ſtands to his people in the relation of a *Governour*, as he has repreſented to them, and preſſed their *obedience* to that rule of action which they ought in reaſon to govern their behaviour by; and as he will call them to an *account* for their actions, and will reward or puniſh them in another world, according to their behaviour here; and they become his people by their chuſing to be *governed* by thoſe laws. So that Chriſt's kingdom, at *preſent*, does not conſiſt in the exerciſe of any *temporal power* or *juriſdiction* over the *perſons* and *properties* of his people; but it is a dominion over the *conſciences* of men, founded only on *argument* and *perſuaſion*; mens conſciences are firſt brought into *ſubjection* to *Chriſt*, by argument and perſwaſion, and then their *perſons* and *properties*, their *affection* and *actions* are, not *forced*, but *voluntarily ſubjected to him*, as being directed and governed by *his* laws, and thereby are engaged in *his* ſervice, and this is ſtrictly and properly *Chriſtian obedience*. The Jews and Romans thought by Chriſt's taking to himſelf the title of *King* that he aſſumed *ſuch temporal* power and juriſdiction over the *perſons* and *properties* of men as the *princes* and *potentates* of the earth exerciſed over their *ſubjects*, and in this view of the caſe they conſidered

conſidered him as an *enemy* to *Ceſar:* but he aſſured them that, at *preſent*, this was not the caſe, and that ſuch his *temporal kingdom* was not of *this age*; for if it were then would his ſervants have fought for him, that he might not have been delivered to the Jews. What ſort of power Chriſt will aſſume at his *ſecond coming*, when *that kingdom* ſhall come which he hath taught his people to *pray* for; when he ſhall take to himſelf his *great power* and *reign*; when the *kingdoms* of the *world* ſhall become the *kingdoms* of *God*, and of his *Chriſt*, is beſides the purpoſe of my preſent enquiry. What I obſerve is that as Chriſt, *as yet*, has not aſſumed nor exerciſed ſuch a *temporal* dominion over his people, but only a dominion over their *conſciences*, reſulting from, and founded only on *argument* and *perſwaſion:* ſo neither has he *communicated* any *ſuch temporal* power or dominion to *others*; and conſequently not any *Chriſtian*, nor any *ſet*, or *order*, or *body of men* among Chriſtians, conſidered as Chriſtians, and by virtue of their being ſuch, have any *right* of *dominion* over the *perſons* or *properties* of their brethren.

SECT.

SECT. II.

AS the great end and the profeſſed deſign of Chriſt's appearing in the world and of his delivering a divine revelation to it was to ſave mens ſouls (as I have before ſhewn): ſo ſurely this is an *end* moſt *excellent* and *valuable* in itſelf, and moſt *worthy* of him who undertook the proſecution of it. Happineſs is the proper object of deſire to every intelligent dependent being, and miſery is the proper object of their averſion and ſhunning; and therefore every ſuch being is naturally led to chuſe and purſue the one, and avoid the other; tho' through their folly they often diſappoint themſelves. So that whoever contributes to the introduction, preſervation, or increaſe of happineſs; or to the prevention, leſſening, or removal of miſery; ſuch an one is a *benefactor* to the *intelligent world.* And as happineſs or miſery may be *more* or *leſs general*, *intenſe*, or *durable*: ſo the benefaction in contributing to the introduction, preſervation, or increaſe of the one,

or to the prevention, leſſening, or removal of the other is *greater*, or *leſs* in proportion. And when *all* theſe circumſtances take place in the ſame caſe in a *very high*, or in the *higheſt degree*; this prodigiouſly *magnifies* that benefaction. And this is plainly the caſe with reſpect to our Lord Jeſus Chriſt in his undertaking for mankind, in which he propoſes and deavours not only to introduce and procure the *greateſt* and the moſt *durable* happineſs, and to prevent the *ſevereſt* and moſt *laſting* miſery; but alſo to anſwer theſe gracious purpoſes to a *whole race* of moral agents, or at leaſt to as many of them whoſe unhappy circumſtances require it; conſequently he is *under God* the *greateſt benefactor* to our ſpecies, provided the means made uſe of by him are ſuitable and proper to obtain thoſe ends.

This leads me to inquire *how*, or in *what way* our Lord Jeſus Chriſt propoſes to *ſave mens ſouls*; that is, what *method* he hath taken to prepare men for, and to inſure to them the *favour* of God, and their *happineſs* in another world; and to prevent them from bringing great and laſting *miſery* upon themſelves. And if we examine the hiſtory of his life and miniſtry, from which alone we can obtain ſatisfaction in the preſent caſe we ſhall find that he applies himſelf to men

as *free beings* who have the direction of their own actions, and as ſuch he lays before them and recommends to their moſt ſerious conſideration certain *doctrinal propoſitions* founded upon the ſuppoſition of a *Deity*; which becauſe of their great importance to mankind, and their being very little attended to, are called the *good news* or the *goſpel*. And as theſe propoſitions were in a *particular* and *ſpecial manner* recommended by Chriſt to publick conſideration, and as he was *particularly* and *ſpecially appointed* to perform that work, they are therefore called the goſpel of *Jeſus Chriſt*. And theſe propoſitions were recommended with this view that a ſerious and well-grounded perſwaſion of thoſe important truths might be ſuch a *ſpring* and *principle* of *action* in men as might reform their vices and *rightly* direct and govern their *minds* and *lives*; and thereby render them worthy of, prepare them for, and inſure to them the favour of God and their happineſs in another world; and prevent them from falling into great and laſting miſery, which otherways they were in great danger of bringing upon themſelves. And a *well-grounded* perſwaſion of thoſe truths *thus* becoming a principle of action in men (as aforeſaid) is called *believing* the goſpel; and *believing* in Jeſus Chriſt; and whoever *thus* believes,

believes, it is declared, that he ſhall be *ſaved.*

The important truths which Chriſt has thus recommended to publick conſideration, may be ſummed up in the following particulars. *Firſt*, he requires and recommends the *conforming* our *minds* and *lives* to that eternal and unalterable *rule* of action which is founded in the *reaſon* of things (which rule is ſummarily contained in the written word of God), and this he lays down as the *only ground* of divine acceptance, and as *that* which will entitle men to the favour of God and the happineſs of another world; and conſequently *this* will prevent them from being greatly and laſtingly miſerable. *Secondly*, if men have lived in a *violation* of this righteous law, by which they have rendered themſelves highly diſpleaſing to *God*, and worthy of his *reſentment*; then Chriſt requires and recommends *repentance* and *reformation* of their *evil* ways as the *only*, and the *ſure ground* of the divine *mercy* and *forgiveneſs*. And *thirdly*, in order to make thoſe truths have the greater impreſſion on the minds and lives of men he declares and aſſures them that *God* has appointed a *day* in which he will *judge* the *world* in *righteouſneſs*, and that he will then either *acquit* or *condemn*, *reward* or *puniſh* them according as they *have*, or *have not* conformed their minds and lives

lives to that rule of righteouſneſs before-mentioned, and according as they *have*, or *have not* repented and amended their evil ways. This is the *true goſpel* of Jeſus Chriſt, and this is the *way* and *method* which Chriſt has taken in order to *ſave mens ſouls*.

SECT.

SECT. III.

FIRST, Chriſt requires and recommends a *conformity* of *mind* and *life* to that *rule* of *action* which is founded in the *reaſon* of things, and makes or declares *that compliance* to be the *ſole ground* of *divine acceptance*, and the *only way* to *life eternal*. And that this is the caſe is moſt manifeſt from the hiſtory of his life and miniſtry, this being the point to which the generality of his *parables* and and *diſcourſes* do moſt apparently tend. For tho' he did not deliver ſuch a complete body of laws or ſyſtem of morality as might particularly direct men how to act under the various and different circumſtances of life in every inſtance (there not having been any ſuch complete ſyſtem given, in, or by any divine revelation that has yet been delivered to the world, or at leaſt this does not appear to have been the caſe), much leſs did he deliver any new body of laws or rule of action to mankind; I ſay, tho' this was not the caſe; yet Chriſt did *recommend* to men and *preſs* their *obedience* to that *law* of *reaſon*

which they were antecedently obliged to govern their behaviour by, as the *hiſtory* of his *life* does abundantly teſtify. He, when opportunity offered, and as the occaſion required treated of *ſeveral branches* of man's duty, and ſhewed in thoſe inſtances what in *reaſon* ought to be *done*, and what *avoided*. He alſo laid down ſome general principles of action, *viz.* the *doing as one would be done by*, the *loving God with all our heart, ſoul, mind and ſtrength*, and the *loving our neighbour as our ſelves*; from which general principles, as they are founded in *reaſon*, ſo the *particulars* of our *duty* under the various and different circumſtances of life are to be *collected*. He likewiſe referred men to that *law* of *reaſon* or ſummary account of man's duty contained in, and which is commonly called the *ten commandments* as the *rule* of their *actions*; and made or declared their *obedience* to it to be the *ground* of God's favour. And this law of reaſon is fitly called the *law* of *Chriſt*, as *he* ſpecially and ſtrictly requires our *compliance* with it, and declares *that* compliance to be the *ſole ground* of divine acceptance, in diſtinction from, and in oppoſition to that *law* of *ceremonies* or *poſitive inſtitutions* which *Moſes* had delivered to the *Jews*, and which therefore was called the *law* of *Moſes*. He alſo repreſented to men the *good* and *bad conſequences* which would

moſt certainly attend their *compliance*, or *non-compliance* with this law, with regard to the *favour* or *diſpleaſure* of God, and their *ſafety* or *miſcarriage* in another world.

Thus in his moſt excellent ſermon on the mount, after he had recommended the practice of *virtue*, and had reproved and condemned the practice of *vice* in many inſtances; that is, after he had ſhewn what *temper* and *behaviour* his Diſciples and followers ought to *put on*, and what to *avoid*; he then repreſented to them the *mighty conſequences* which depended upon *ſuch* their tempers and actions. *Matthew* vii. 21, 22, 23. *Not every one that ſaith unto me, Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven* (which will he had been ſpeaking about in the precedent ſermon). *Many will ſay unto me in that day*, (*viz.* the day of judgment) *Lord, Lord, have we not propheſied in thy name? and in thy name have caſt out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profeſs unto them, I never knew you: depart from me ye that work iniquity.* Here we ſee are great pretenſions, *profeſſing* of Chriſt, *propheſying* in his name, and *working miracles* by his power and authority; and yet all this *availed nothing* with reſpect to the *favour* of God, and their *ſafety* in another world; becauſe they were

vanting in *that* upon which their acceptance with God ſolely depended; namely, conforming their *tempers* and *actions* to the *law* of *righteouſneſs*. And therefore ſaid Chriſt, notwithſtanding theſe your *profeſſions* and *pretenſions*, admitting them to be *juſt*, *I never knew you*: that is, I never *approved* of you, and will certainly *condemn* you for your unrighteous behaviour.

Our Lord proceeds verſes 24, 25. *Therefore, whoever heareth theſe ſayings of mine, and doth them, I will liken him to a wiſe man who built his houſe upon a rock: and the rain deſcended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that houſe; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.* Here we ſee what that *rock* is which is a Chriſtian's *ſecurity* in the day of his trial; namely, the attending to and following the advice and counſel which Chriſt had given in the precedent ſermon, and doing what he had been recommending to our practice. Chriſt had been recommending to his audience the practice of moral * virtue, or the conforming mens tempers and actions

* Note. Tho' I think no action can be virtuous, but what is founded in reaſon; yet leaſt any ſhould think that the word Virtue is of a more extenſive ſignification, therefore to prevent any exception which otherwiſe might have been taken, I call the virtue here referred to, Moral Virtue.

to that law or rule of action which is founded in the reaſon of things; and therefore, as ſuch, it is what God requires our obedience to, and makes that obedience the ground of our acceptance in his ſight. I ſay, it is *hearing* theſe *ſayings* of *Chriſt* and *doing* them, which is (in Chriſt's account) building upon a *rock*, and which is a Chriſtian's *only ſecurity* in the day of his trial. It is not profeſſing Chriſt, nor calling him Lord, nor giving him the higheſt appellations, it is not propheſying in his name, nor working miracles by his power and authority, it is not an orthodox faith, nor ſubſcribing creeds, nor aſſenting to (if ſuch a thing could be) myſteries and unintelligible propoſitions, it is not a conſtant attendance on, nor a warm zeal for ceremonies and external obſervances, nor the like, which are the rock a Chriſtian may ſafely and ſecurely build upon: but it is to have his mind poſſeſſed with thoſe *virtuous qualities*, and his life adorned with thoſe *worthy* and *virtuous actions* that Chriſt in the preceding ſermon had been recommending, which alone can afford a juſt ground of hope and comfort to him; becauſe it is theſe alone which can render him a *worthy* and a *proper object* of divine regard.

Our Lord goes on verſes 26, 27. *And every one that heareth theſe ſayings of mine, and doth them not, ſhall be likened unto a fooliſh*

fooliſh man which built his houſe upon the ſand: and the rain deſcended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that houſe, and it fell, and great was the fall thereof. Here we ſee what folly and madneſs it is for a man to make any thing beſides hearing theſe ſayings of Chriſt and doing them (or the practice of moral virtue) the ground of his confidence; becauſe any thing, and every thing ſhort of this would be like building a houſe upon the *ſand*, which when the rain deſcended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon it, it would *fall*, and *great* would be the fall thereof. From hence likewiſe we may plainly perceive what Chriſt means by *believing in him* in the following declarations. *Except ye believe that I am he, ye ſhall die in your ſins. He that believeth on me, hath everlaſting life. He that believeth, and is baptized ſhall be ſaved; and he that believeth not, ſhall be damned*; and the like. Where by believing it is evident that Chriſt did not, neither could he mean a bare aſſent to the truth of this propoſition, *viz.* that *Jeſus is the Chriſt*; but he means by it the *attending* to that *meſſage* which he was ſent to deliver to the world, and the *governing* our *minds* and *lives* according to it. To believe in Chriſt is the ſame as to believe the goſpel or the good news which Chriſt proclaimed to the

world, and both imply ſuch a ſerious and well-grounded perſwaſion of thoſe truths as becomes a principle of action in the believer, and rightly directs his mind and life. Whoſoever in this ſenſe believes in Chriſt, or believes the Goſpel; that is, is thereby wrought upon to become a *virtuous* and *good man*; ſuch a one will be *ſaved*, or *have everlaſting life*. And whoſoever in this ſenſe does not believe, that is, does not become a virtuous and good man, but goes on in a *vicious* and *wicked courſe of life*, ſuch a one will *die in his ſins* or be *damned*. It is the doing or not doing what Chriſt requires, which is the ground of our ſafety or miſcarriage; and this is the teſt by which we ſhall be tried, according to Chriſt's own account of this matter.

But our Lord makes the caſe ſtill plainer, if ſuch a thing can be, in his anſwer to the man's queſtion, *Matthew* xix. 16. *What good thing ſhall I do that I may have eternal life?* This was a plain and a fair queſtion, a queſtion of the laſt importance, and which called for a plain, a full, and a ſerious anſwer; and which Chriſt was obliged (if he would anſwer his character as a ſafe guide to life eternal) to anſwer accordingly. And the anſwer which Chriſt returned to this important queſtion was, *if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments*, verſe 17. And

And I think it may fairly and juſtly be preſumed that this anſwer was as *plain* and *full* as the caſe required; and conſequently that the only ground of divine acceptance, or that which renders men pleaſing and acceptable to God, and which ſecures to them the happineſs of another world, is *keeping the commandments*. But then the queſtion will return what Chriſt meant by the Commandments. And the anſwer is evident, *viz.* he meant that law or rule of action which is founded in the reaſon of things, and which is ſummarily contained in the *ten Commandments*. And that this is the truth of the caſe appears from what follows. For as there had been an opinion among the Jews that there was one command which they were more eſpecially obliged to obſerve, and that a ſtrict obſervance of that one command would in ſome meaſure excuſe their neglect of the reſt: ſo when our Lord told the man he muſt keep the Commandments, the man aſked which? In anſwer to this ſecond queſtion, our Lord (by explaining what he meant by the Commandments), did not ſend the man back to any law of ceremonies or poſitive inſtitutions which had before been given to the Jews, neither did he point out to the man any ſuch law or body of laws which he intended to lay upon Chriſtians, and to declare it to be the con-

dition of God's favour, but on the contrary he referred the man to that ſummary account of man's duty called the ten Commandments. *Jeſus ſaid, thou ſhalt do no murder, thou ſhalt not commit adultery, thou ſhalt not ſteal, thou ſhalt not bear falſe witneſs, honour thy father and thy mother: and thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thy ſelf*, verſes 18, 19. or as St *Mark* hath it chap. x. 19. *Thou knoweſt the commandments, do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not ſteal, do not bear falſe witneſs, defraud not, honour thy father and thy mother.* And thus St *Luke* hath it chap. xviii. 20. *Thou knoweſt the commandments, do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not ſteal, do not bear falſe witneſs, honour thy father and thy mother.* From all which it is moſt evident that by the Commandments Chriſt means the *moral law*, or that rule of action which is founded in the reaſon of things; and which therefore every rational being ought to direct his behaviour by, and whoever makes this law the meaſure of his actions ſhall have *everlaſting life.* Again,

Our Lord returned the like anſwer to the queſtion which the Lawyer put to him, *Luke* x. 25, 26, 27, 28. *And behold, a certain lawyer ſtood up, and tempted him, ſaying, Maſter, what ſhall I do to inherit eternal life? He* (*viz.* Chriſt) *ſaid unto him, what*

what is written in the law? How readeſt thou? And he (the man) *anſwering, ſaid, thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, and with all thy ſtrength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thy ſelf. And he* (*viz.* Chriſt) *ſaid unto him, thou haſt anſwered right; this do, and thou ſhalt live.* Here again we ſee Chriſt declared that the way to eternal life, or the true grounds of divine acceptance is to keep the Commandments, by loving God and our neighbour, which is nothing elſe but the conforming our minds and lives to that rule of action which is founded in the reaſon of things. And

Here I beg my reader to obſerve that this is *Chriſt's own* account of the matter; and therefore it may *moſt ſafely* be relied upon. And as the queſtions which were put to him were of the *higheſt importance* to mankind, *viz.* what men ſhould do that they might obtain eternal life; and as he was ſent into the world on purpoſe that he might be a *ſafe guide* to men in this very affair: ſo if he had not given a *full* and *true anſwer* to thoſe queſtions, if he had not *plainly* declared *all* that was neceſſary for men to *know* and *do* in order to obtain eternal life; then

he

he *would not* have been true to his truſt, he *would not* have anſwered his Character; but this is not to be ſuppoſed. And therefore we may depend upon it that the keeping the Commandments, or the governing our minds and lives by that rule of action which is founded in the reaſon of things will moſt certainly render us pleaſing and acceptable to God, and ſecure to us the happineſs of another world.

I would alſo deſire my reader to obſerve, that our Lord Chriſt did not propoſe or point out to men any *new way* to God's favour and eternal life, but on the contrary he recommended that good old way which always was, and always will be the true way to life eternal; *viz.* the keeping the commandments, or the loving God and our neighbour which is the ſame thing, and is the ſum and ſubſtance of the moral law. This plain path-way to heaven lay neglected, and for the moſt part unfrequented; men both Jews and Gentiles having forſaken the fountain of living water, that is, the true way to life eternal; and hewen to themſelves ciſterns broken ciſterns that can hold no water; that is, they had found out new and falſe ways of recommending

mending themſelves to God's favour. And this rendered our Saviour's undertaking and miniſtry ſo much the more needful. And therefore it was truly ſaid of him that he was to be, (not the maker, but) *the reſtorer of right paths to dwell* (or walk) *in.*

SECT.

SECT. IV.

AS Chriſt requires and recommends a conformity of mind and life to that unalterable rule of action which is founded in the reaſon of things as the only ground of divine acceptance, and as the only way to life eternal; ſo if men have lived in a violation of this righteous law by which they have rendred themſelves diſpleaſing to God, and worthy of his juſt reſentment: then *ſecondly*, Chriſt requires and recommends *repentance* and *reformation* of their evil ways as the *only ground* of the divine mercy and forgiveneſs. The doctrine of *repentance* and *remiſſion of ſins* were what Chriſt was chiefly concerned to publiſh to the world; becauſe as mankind were generally corrupt and vicious, and were far from conforming their minds and lives to that rule of righteouſneſs which ought to have been the meaſure of their actions; ſo they not only took falſe meaſures for the recommending themſelves to the divine favour, but alſo upon a ſenſe of their guilt they went into falſe ways of obtaining

obtaining the divine mercy; and this was too too much the caſe both of Jews and Gentiles. By falſe ways and meaſures I mean ſuch ways and meaſures as were not ſuitable and proper, and therefore were inſufficient to anſwer theſe purpoſes. Mankind being under ſuch circumſtances, it became our Lord Jeſus Chriſt as he was ſent to be the Saviour of the World to *undeceive* them in theſe particulars, by fairly and plainly repreſenting to them the true and the only grounds of divine acceptance; and (as mankind were generally vicious and wicked), to repreſent to them the only and the ſure way to obtain the divine mercy and forgiveneſs; and to awaken in men a juſt and an affecting ſenſe of the great importance of theſe things, as their ſafety or miſcarriage in another world does manifeſtly depend upon them. This was plainly the buſineſs of one who took upon him, or who was ſent of God to be *the Saviour of the world.* And this was what our Lord Jeſus Chriſt carefully and faithfully performed in the exerciſe of his miniſtry.

Chriſt not only called upon ſinners to repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance, but he alſo plainly and expreſsly declared this was the very end and purpoſe of his coming, *viz.* to call ſinners to repentance, and to aſſure them that except

they did repent they would all periſh: which plainly ſuppoſes and implies that if they did repent and amend their ways, they would obtain the Divine mercy. And as he preached the doctrines of repentance and remiſſion of ſins to the *Jews* in his own perſon; ſo he roſe from the dead on purpoſe that he might commiſſion, and ſpirit, and ſend out the Apoſtles to preach the ſame doctrines to the *reſt of mankind.* This is what he expreſsly declared to his Diſciples. Saith he, *thus it is written, and thus it behoved Chriſt to ſuffer, and to riſe from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preached in his name among all nations.* Luke xxiv. 46, 47. Which is as much as if he had ſaid, thus it is written, and thus it behoved Chriſt as he was ſent of God to be the *Saviour* of the *world* to take all proper care that the doctrines of repentance and remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preached among all nations; and as he did not preach thoſe doctrines to all in his own perſon, but only to the ſingle nation of the Jews, in the doing of which he drew on him the hatred and unreaſonable reſentment of that people, which was ſhewn in their proſecuting him even unto death, and which therefore it behoved him to *ſuffer*, and not to draw back in the diſcharge of ſo weighty a truſt: ſo likewiſe it behoved him to riſe again from the

the dead, and to commiſſion, and ſend out his Apoſtles to preach the ſame doctrine to the reſt of the world. I ſay, it behoved Chriſt to do all this as he had undertaken to promote and ſet forward the *ſalvation* of *mankind*, which truſt he faithfully diſcharged accordingly. And,

Here I beg leave to remind my readers that to preach the *goſpel*, and to preach the doctrines of *repentance* and *remiſſion of ſins* is in Chriſt's account the *ſame thing*; for what he calls preaching the goſpel at one time, he calls preaching the doctrines of repentance and remiſſion of ſins at another. Thus Mark xvi. 15. *And he ſaid unto them, go ye into all the world, and preach the goſpel to every creature*; compared with *Luke* xxiv. 46, 47. *And he ſaid unto them, thus it is written, and thus it behoved Chriſt to ſuffer, and to riſe from the dead the third day, and that repentance, and remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preached in his name among all nations.* Here we ſee what Chriſt means by the goſpel, or what that goſpel is which he commiſſioned, and ſent out his Apoſtles to preach to the world: *viz.* it is the doctrines of repentance and remiſſion of ſins.

I would likewiſe remind my readers that Chriſt hath pointed out to ſinners no other way to the Divine mercy and forgiveneſs, than that *good old way*, viz. by repentance and

and reformation of their evil ways, which *always was*, and *always will be* the true and only way for ſinners to obtain the divine mercy. This is the way which God by his prophets heretofore pointed out to the ſinful nation of Iſrael. Thus *Iſaiah* i. 16, 17. *Waſh ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, ceaſe to do evil, learn to do well, ſeek judgment, relieve the oppreſſed, judge the fatherleſs, plead for the widow. Come now and let us reaſon together, ſaith the Lord, though your ſins be as ſcarlet, they ſhall be as white as ſnow; though they be red like crimſon, they ſhall be as wool.* Which is the ſame as if he had ſaid, though your ſins are many and great; yet upon your repentance and reformation they ſhall be forgiven. Thus again, *Ezekiel* xviii. 30. *Therefore, I will judge you O houſe of Iſrael, every one according to his ways, ſaith the Lord God; repent, and turn yourſelves from all your tranſgreſſions, ſo iniquity ſhall not be your ruin.* Which is the ſame as to ſay, that upon their repentance and reformation, they ſhould obtain mercy. As to that doctrine *viz.* that Chriſt hath by his ſufferings and death made ſatisfaction to God for the ſins of the world, and thereby merited the ſinners diſcharge from condemnation, this doctrine Chriſt did not preach; and therefore it cannot be any part of his goſpel, but it is directly oppoſite

ſite to it, and tends to ſubvert it. The true doctrines of the goſpel of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt touching this matter, are the doctrines of *repentance* and *remiſſion of ſins*; that is, repentance and reformation is the only way to the divine mercy. Let not therefore the ſinner truſt to, nor rely upon the vain words of men, who like *Rabſhakeh* the captain of the hoſt of the king of *Aſſyria*, may, and will deceive them; but let them truſt to, and rely upon the words of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who was ſent of God, to be their guide and inſtructer in this particular, and who, they may be aſſured upon good grounds, will not deceive them in ſo important an affair.

SECT. V.

AS Chriſt repreſented to, and preſſed upon men a conformity of mind and life to that eternal law or rule of action which is founded in the reaſon of things, as the only ground of the divine acceptance; and as he recommended to, and preſſed upon ſinners repentance and reformation of their evil ways, as the only ground of the divine mercy and forgiveneſs; ſo that thoſe important truths might make the deeper impreſſion, and have a more laſting influence upon the minds and lives of men, he *thirdly* and *laſtly*, aſſured them that God has appointed a time in which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, and that he will then call all men to an account for their actions, and will acquit or condemn, reward or puniſh them in another ſtate, according to their behaviour in this. Thus *Matthew* xxv. 31. to the end of the chapter. *When the ſon of man ſhall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then ſhall*

ſhall be ſit upon the throne of his glory. And before him ſhall be gathered all nations, and he ſhall ſeparate them one from another, as a ſhepherd divideth the ſheep from the goats. And he ſhall ſet the ſheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then ſhall the King ſay to them on his right hand, come ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirſty, and ye gave me drink: I was a ſtranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was ſick, and ye viſited me: I was in priſon, and ye came unto me. Then ſhall the righteous anſwer him, ſaying, Lord, when ſaw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirſty, and gave thee drink? when ſaw we thee a ſtranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? or when ſaw we thee ſick, or in priſon, and came unto thee? And the king ſhall anſwer, and ſay unto them, verily I ſay unto you, in as much as ye have done it to one of the leaſt of theſe my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then ſhall he ſay alſo unto them on the left hand, depart from me, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirſty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a ſtranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: ſick, and in priſon,

and ye viſited me not. Then ſhall they alſo anſwer him, ſaying, Lord, when ſaw we thee an hungred, or a thirſt, or a ſtranger, or naked, or ſick, or in priſon, and did not miniſter unto thee? Then ſhall he anſwer them, ſaying, verily I ſay unto you, in as much as ye did it not to one of the leaſt of theſe, ye did it not to me. And theſe ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment: but the righteous into life eternal. Here we ſee Chriſt has not only declared that God will moſt certainly judge the world, by him; but alſo he has ſhewn by what rule he ſhall proceed in paſſing that judgment; *viz.* he ſhall approve or condemn, reward or puniſh every man as he has, or has not conformed his affections and actions to that righteous law which is founded in the reaſon of things, the end of which law is *Charity*, or *benevolent affection and actions.*

The moral law, or that law which is founded in the reaſon of things is a law of *love*, or a law which is briefly comprehended in this ſaying, namely, *thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyſelf.* St *Paul* has juſtly obſerved, that as *love worketh no ill to his neighbour*; ſo *love* (or a conduct directed by love), *is the fulfilling of the law.* Romans xiii. 10. And as the moral law is a law of love: ſo Chriſt hath declared that it is by *this law* every man

man ſhall be tried; every man ſhall be approved or condemned, rewarded or puniſhed according as he has, or has not conformed his affections and actions to this law of love. *Then* (viz. at the day of judgment), *ſhall the King ſay to them on his right hand, Come ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world. For I was* (in mine and your needy brethren) *an hungred, and ye gave me meat:* &c. And *then ſhall he ſay alſo to them on his left hand, Go ye curſed into everlaſting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat*, &c. Chriſt as a righteous judge will approve or condemn, reward or puniſh every man according as there has been an antecedent fitneſs, or unfitneſs, worthineſs, or unworthineſs in the perſon judged. And this judgment is to be conſidered, not as an *arbitrary inſtitution*, or a particular appointment of God, in theſe *latter ages*; but as a *part* of the *original ſcheme of providence*, when this world was *firſt* called into being. This is evident from what Chriſt ſaith of that kingdom which the righteous ſhall inherit, *viz.* that it was prepared for them from the foundation of the world. So that God will judge the world, not becauſe he has decla-

red in, and by the goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt that he will do it; but he has declared in, and by the goſpel that he will do it, becauſe it is fit and reaſonable that he ſhould, and becauſe he originally purpoſed ſo to do.

SECT.

SECT. VI.

HAving ſhewn in the three preceding ſections what is the true goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt, or what is that doctrine of life and ſalvation which Chriſt himſelf preached, which likewiſe it behoved him to preach, or which the circumſtances of things required that he ſhould preach, as he was ſent to be the ſaviour of the world, and which therefore is ſtrictly and properly called the goſpel or the good news: I now therefore beg leave to ſhew, in *one* or *two* inſtances, what is not that goſpel. And

Firſt, the Goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt is not *an hiſtorical account of matters of fact.* As thus. Chriſt ſuffered, died, roſe from the dead, aſcended into heaven, *&c.* Theſe are *hiſtorical facts* the *credibility* of which ariſes from the ſtrength of thoſe evidences which are, or can be offered in their favour: but then thoſe facts are not the *goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt*, neither in whole, nor in part. *Luke* vii. 22. *Go your way, and tell John what*

things ye have ſeen and heard, how that the blind ſee, the lame walk, the lepers are cleanſed, the deaf hear, the dead are raiſed, to the poor the goſpel is preached, &c. Here we ſee that the goſpel was preached to the poor by Chriſt himſelf, *antecedent* to the tranſactions I now refer to; and therefore thoſe facts, or any doctrines founded upon them, (ſuch as that of *Chriſt's ſatisfaction*, or that of his *interceſſion*, or the like,) cannot be any part of that goſpel.

Thus again. Chriſt turned water into wine, gave ſight to the blind, feet to the lame, life to the dead, &c. Theſe are facts, which though they were proper to awaken the attention of his hearers, and to give weight to his preaching and miniſtry; yet the *hiſtory of them* is no part of his goſpel. The hiſtory of theſe facts when well atteſted may be offered as an evidence of the *Divinity* of Chriſt's *miſſion*; but then this hiſtory, as far as it is an hiſtory of ſuch facts only, can be no part of that miſſion; and conſequently can be no part of Chriſt's Goſpel. This is evident from the text I before quoted, *Luke* vii. 22. Where the working of miracles, and preaching the goſpel to the poor, are by Chriſt conſidered and repreſented as two different things. The goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt was that doctrine which he preached (the ſum of which I have already conſidered),

and

and not any hiſtory of facts which relate either to his perſon or miniſtry. Beſides, thoſe facts are ſuch as the *ſalvation of mankind* are not primarily and immediately, but only ſecondarily and mediately concerned with; and therefore they are no part of Chriſt's goſpel.

Thus again. St *Peter* ſaith, that Chriſt *went and preached to the ſpirits in priſon, which ſome time were diſobedient, when once the long ſuffering of God waited in the days of Noah.* 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20. This is a ſhort but dark branch of hiſtory, or a relation of a matter of fact, which relation has puzzled the heads of many enquirers to find out its true meaning; though it is a matter of no concern to us what is meant by it, or how St *Peter* came by his information, or whether the relation given be true, or falſe; ſeeing it is no part of the goſpel of Chriſt, and it is what the ſaving mens ſouls is not concerned with.

Thus again. St *James* (as in chap. v. 17, 18.) relates it as a matter of fact, *viz.* that Elias *prayed earneſtly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth by the ſpace of three years and ſix months. And he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.* And according to St *James*'s *repreſentation of the ſtory*, the caſe ſeems to be, not only that this great

drought

drought was brought upon the land, in conſequence of the *prophet's prayer*; but alſo that the prophet's prayer was the produce of his *paſſion* and *reſentment*. *Elias was a man ſubject to like paſſions as we are, and he prayed earneſtly*, &c. Now, whether St *James* received that part of the hiſtory, *viz.* that the three years and a half's drought upon the land, and then the giving of rain, was the *effect* of the *prophet's prayer*; I ſay, whether St *James* received this by *tradition* from the *Jews*, (for it does not appear to be ſupported by the hiſtory of thoſe times), or how he came by his information, or whether it be true in fact, or not, it maketh nothing to us; ſeeing it is no part of the goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt, and it is what the ſaving of our ſouls is not in the leaſt concerned with. Again,

Secondly, the goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt is not any *particular private opinion* of any, or of all the writers of the hiſtory of his life and miniſtry; nor any *private opinion* of any, or of all thoſe whom he ſent out to publiſh his goſpel to the world; nor is any of their *reaſonings*, or *concluſions* founded on, or drawn from ſuch opinions any part of that goſpel. Thus St *John* begins his hiſtory, *John* i. 1, 2, 3. *In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God. The ſame was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him*

was

was not any thing made that was made. Theſe propoſitions, for any thing that appears to the contrary, are only the *private opinion* of St *John*, who wrote the hiſtory of Chriſt's life and miniſtry, and they are no part of Chriſt's goſpel; *viz.* that goſpel which he preached to the poor, and which he gave in charge to his Apoſtles to publiſh to the world. And therefore whether Chriſt was the *Logos* or Word, whether he was with God, and was God, or whether he made all things in the ſenſe in which St *John* uſes thoſe terms, or not, is of no conſequence to us; becauſe theſe points are no part of Chriſt's goſpel, and they are what the ſalvation of mankind is not in the leaſt concerned with. Whether Chriſt pre-exiſted, or not; or whether he was the agent employed by God in making this viſible world, or not; are points which do not affect the ſaving of mens ſouls at all; it being ſufficient for us to know, that he was the ſent of God, and that *the word of the Lord in his mouth was truth.* This I ſay, is ſufficient for us to know, with regard to our ſalvation; and therefore whether the forementioned propoſitions are truths, or not; is of no conſequence to us in that reſpect. Beſides, we do not know what was the ground and foundation of St *John*'s opinion with reſpect to thoſe points, and therefore we cannot poſſibly form a judgment whether

his opinion was well grounded, or not; and conſequently whether it ought to be relied upon, or not. To ſay in this caſe that St *John* was *divinely inſpired* in writing his hiſtory, is (for any thing that appears) groundleſly to preſume a point which is void of proof; and which therefore is not to be admitted.

Thus again. St *Paul* ſeems to be of opinion that the goſpel being preached to the Gentiles was owing to the generality of the Jews *rejecting* it, as appears from his argument and reaſonings *Romans* xi, from *verſe* the 10th to the end of the chapter. And it ſeems to be his opinion likewiſe that it was a part of the original ſcheme of providence, and a thing intended by God that the body of the Jewiſh nation ſhould thus reject the goſpel, and thereby give him an occaſion of offering it to the Gentiles; or at leaſt, that he foreknowing the Jews would act thus takes an occaſion from that circumſtance, (being as it were affronted with, and reſenting their ingratitude), to offer the goſpel to the Gentiles, which otherways he would not have done. St *Paul* alſo ſeems to be of opinion that God by this method of his providence intended, not only to ſhew kindneſs to the Gentiles; but alſo to mortify the Jews, and provoke them to jealouſy, which was likely to be the caſe when they ſaw the Gentiles who were a people whom they very much deſpiſed taken into

into divine favour, and made their rivals. This ſeems to be the purport of the Apoſtle's argument. The points here referred to, I think, are no other than the *private opinion* of St *Paul*. Now, whether that opinion was founded on ſome *texts* of the *Old Teſtament*; or on the words of Chriſt to the woman of Canaan, (*Matth.* xv. 24. *I am not ſent but unto the loſt ſheep of Iſrael*); or on the *practice* of *Chriſt*, who in his own perſon preached the goſpel to the Jews only; or whether the Apoſtle's opinion was well-grounded, or not; or whether we rightly underſtand the Apoſtle's meaning herein, or not, it maketh no matter to us; ſeeing it, and all his reaſonings founded upon it are no part of Chriſt's goſpel.

To this I may add, that the *private opinions* of thoſe who wrote Chriſt's hiſtory, and of thoſe who were appointed and ſent out to preach his goſpel to the world, were in many inſtances very *abſtruſe*, and much above the capacities of the common people. Whereas, the goſpel which Chriſt preached to the poor, and which he gave in charge to his Apoſtles to publiſh to the world, was *plain* and *intelligible*, and level to the *loweſt underſtanding*, as indeed it *ought*, and *muſt needs* be. For if Chriſt had preached to the *poor*, that is, to the lower part of mankind an hiſtorical account of facts, or a ſet of my-

ſterious and almoſt unintelligible propoſitions, which had been liable to a *thouſand difficulties* and *perplexities*; this would have been, not to inſtruct, but to confound them, and would have been the ſame to them as preaching in an unknown tongue; but to our ſatisfaction and comfort this is by no means the caſe. I might proceed farther, but this is ſufficient for my preſent purpoſe, which is to remind my reader that every thing is not Chriſt's goſpel which weak, or ignorant, or artful men have taken upon them to call by that name.

SECT.

SECT. VII.

AS the grand deſign of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt was to ſave mens ſouls, and as he proſecuted that deſign by his propoſing and recommending to mens moſt ſerious conſideration certain doctrinal propoſitions, which becauſe of their great importance to mankind are called the good news or the goſpel: ſo he took ſeveral other ſteps, and did ſeveral other things in order to render that goſpel effectual to anſwer the gracious purpoſe for which it was intended. And

Firſt, Chriſt according to the account given in the hiſtory, *wrought a long train of miracles*; that is, he did upon ſeveral occaſions, and in a variety of ways, exerciſe ſuch power as was greatly ſuperiour to any power that is ordinarily found amongſt men, the effects of which in common language are called *miracles*. And as this power was employed in acts of *kindneſs* and *benevolence*, *viz.*

viz. in giving ſight to the blind, health to the ſick, life to the dead, *&c.* ſo it was chiefly intended to ſet forward the ſalvation of mankind, by *alarming* the people, and calling in their moſt *ſerious attention* to what Chriſt had to offer to them; and by ſtamping a *divine Character* upon his preaching and miniſtry; by which means his doctrine was likely to have the greater influence, and make a more laſting impreſſion upon the minds and lives of men. For tho' Chriſt's doctrine was exactly conformable to our natural notions of things, and therefore when conſidered alone it was worthy of all acceptation; yet when to this was added a *divine character*, and it came recommended as the word and will of God, this naturally brought it home to the minds of men with much greater weight and power than otherways it would have come; at leaſt, this was likely to be the caſe with the leſs conſidering part of our ſpecies, and who are much the greater part of mankind.

I do not hereby charge my ſelf with the *proof* of the facts before-mentioned, neither do I enter into thoſe queſtions, *viz.* whether thoſe facts were a ſtrict and proper proof of the *divinity* of Chriſt's miſſion, or whether when all things are taken into the caſe they carry with them the *higher degree* of *probability*

probability that they were wrought by the *power of God* rather than by the agency of any other being, theſe are points beſide my preſent purpoſe: but what I obſerve is admitting they were really wrought as the hiſtory ſets forth, then they naturally tended, not only to draw the multitude about our Lord, but alſo to call in their attention to what he had to offer to them, and carefully to conſider the truth and reaſonableneſs of it. And as Chriſt repreſented himſelf as a *meſſenger* ſent from *God*; ſo thoſe facts were likely to be of weight upon the minds of the people in that reſpect. To ſee a man exerciſe ſuch power as was greatly ſuperiour to any power that is ordinarily found amongſt men, which power was employed in inſtantly giving ſight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, feet to the lame, ſtrength to the weak, health to the ſick, life to the dead, and the like; and that in the ſupport of a doctrine which is exactly conformable to our natural notions of things, which is founded in truth and reaſon, and which is greatly ſubſervient to the preſent and future well being of mankind; this ſurely muſt lead men to *reflection* and *conſideration*; and thoſe facts muſt have *weight* upon the minds of the ſpectators, and carry with them at leaſt the *face of a probability* that they were

wrought by the *power of God*, rather than by the agency of any other being; and as ſuch were evidences of Chriſt's divine miſſion. And thus the miracles which Chriſt wrought were ſubſervient to the furtherance of his goſpel.

SECT.

SECT. VIII.

SECONDLY, that the goſpel might come the better recommended to the world Chriſt was in his own perſon an example of *ſtrict conformity* to it, by conforming his affections and actions to that unalterable rule of action which is founded in the reaſon of things. Chriſt *preached* his own *life* if I may ſo ſpeak, and *lived* his own *doctrine*, and thereby he was at once a ſtanding monument of the practicableneſs of virtue, and of the preſent peace and happineſs that flows from it. In him we may ſee what it is to live a godly, a righteous, a ſober, and a benevolent life; and that what he requires from us as the ground of God's favour is neither *unreaſonable*, nor *impracticable*. In him we have an example of a quiet and peaceable ſpirit, of a becoming modeſty and ſobriety, juſt and honeſt, upright and ſincere, and above all of a moſt gracious and benevolent temper and behaviour. One who did no wrong, no injury to any man, in whoſe mouth was no guile, who

went about doing good, not only by his preaching and miniſtry, but alſo in curing all manner of diſeaſes among the people. His *life* was a beautiful picture of *human nature*, when in its native purity and ſimplicity, and ſhewed at once what *excellent creatures* men would be, when under the influence and power of that *goſpel* which he preached unto them.

And as his holy life and doctrine drew on him the unreaſonable reſentment of the *Clergy* among the *Jews*, who ſtirred up the reſt of the people againſt him: ſo this gave an occaſion for his *ſealing* his teſtimony with his *blood*, and of giving an inſtance of the greateſt *benevolence* towards mankind. And as his *life* was an excellent pattern and example of every good word and work, and therefore very fit and proper for his diſciples and followers to copy after: ſo his *death* was not leſs exemplary. For he not only laid down his life to promote the *greateſt*, and the moſt *general good* to mankind; but he did it in ſuch a manner, (by exerciſing ſuch *patience* and *reſignation* under the ſevereſt trials and moſt painful afflictions and perſecutions) as rendred him highly worthy of our imitation. He was very ſenſible that the great thing which he had undertaken to proſecute was the *ſaving of mens ſouls*; and as it diſpoſed him to *do*, and *ſuffer* whatever was neceſſary

neceſſary or expedient to forward this great and gracious deſign: ſo it induced him to overlook the *cruelty* and *unreaſonable reſentment* of his perſecutors, by *pitying* and *praying* for them, whilſt he was ſuffering the moſt intenſe pain from them, and even dying by their hands. And thus his life and death were made ſubſervient to his miniſtry, and ſerved to recommend his goſpel to the world.

SECT. IX.

THIRDLY, that the goſpel might be recommended with the better grace to the world, and to poſterity, and that it might have a more laſting influence upon the minds and lives of men, Chriſt laid a foundation for *friendly ſocieties* or families of love, who being united in the *profeſſion*, and living under the *power* and *influence* of his goſpel, might be acted by a friendly and brotherly affection, and from thence be led to be helpmates to, and watch over each other for their good; to bear one another's burthens, ſympathize with and comfort one another under the various afflictions and perſecutions they might meet with in, and from the world; and by a good example provoke one another to love and good works. Chriſt likewiſe laid a foundation for ſuch ſocieties, not only to anſwer the valuable purpoſes before-mentioned; but alſo that thoſe ſocieties might be *lights to the world*, and be living patterns to others of the practicableneſs of virtue, and of ſuch a temper and behaviour as

as renders each individual a bleſſing to himſelf, and to ſociety, and moſt acceptable to God, and thereby recommend the *goſpel* to their acceptance. Chriſtian Societies are intended to be like *a city ſet on an hill* which cannot be hid; that is they are intended to be a collection of perſons who for their plainneſs and ſimplicity, their juſtice honeſty and integrity, their modeſty temperance and ſobriety, their peaceable and quiet, their loving friendly and benevolent behaviour towards all men without diſtinction as are thereby *remarkably valuable*, and ſuch as the world cannot but *obſerve* and *approve*. For tho' an individual may eſcape general obſervation, yet ſurely a ſociety of ſuch perſons cannot paſs unobſerved. Chriſtian ſocieties are intended to be a *ſpecimen* of the *bleſſed effects* of the goſpel of Chriſt, when it is received as it ought to be; that is, when it becomes a principle of action in men, which rightly directs and governs their minds and lives. Chriſtianity is not a *name*, but a *thing*; and therefore it is not the *profeſſing*, but *living* according to the goſpel which truly repreſents *it* to the world. Chriſtians are known to be ſuch, not by their name, or by their profeſſion, but by their lives. John xiii. 35. *By this ſhall all men know that ye are my* (*viz.* Chriſt's) *Diſciples, if ye have love one to another.* The *banner* of a Chriſtian,

is not the *picture* of a croſs hung upon a pole, or made upon a man's forehead; but it is a *virtuous* and *unblameable converſation*, or a mind and life conformed to the goſpel of Chriſt. Theſe are the purpoſes which Chriſtian *aſſociations* are intended to ſerve, and thus Chriſt intended that ſuch aſſociations ſhould be *ſubſervient* to the furtherance of the *goſpel*, and ſhould recommend it to a general acceptance.

Chriſt did not lay the foundation of friendly ſocieties to anſwer the purpoſes either of *pomp*, or *wealth*, or *power*. He never intended that among his Diſciples and followers, *ſome* ſhould be *ſingled out* from their *brethren* to be poſſeſſed of great revenues, live in ſtately palaces, wallow in luxury and eaſe, or ſordidly heap up riches to raiſe a family, lord it over thoſe by whoſe labours they are maintained, clothed in pompous and antick dreſſes, placed on thrones or garniſhed ſtalls and ſeats of honour, aſſuming and exerciſing dominion over their brethren; and that *others* ſhould labour to maintain them, be ſubject to them, bow down before them, and call them Rabbi, Rabbi. Chriſt was ſo far from giving any countenance to any thing of this kind, that on the contrary he has ſtrictly forbid it. Matthew xx. 25, 26, 27, 28. *But Jeſus called them* (*viz.* his diſciples) *unto him, and ſaid, ye know that the princes of the*

the Gentiles exerciſe dominion over them, and they that are great exerciſe authority upon them; but it ſhall not be ſo among you, but whoſoever will be great among you, let him be your miniſter, and whoſoever will be chief among you, let him be your ſervant, even as the ſon of man came not to be miniſtred unto, but to miniſter, and to give his life a ranſom for many. Chap. xxiii. 8, 9, 10. *But be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your maſter even Chriſt, and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth, for one is your Father which is in heaven. Neither be ye called maſter, for one is your maſter even Chriſt.* Here we ſee Chriſt hath taken all poſſible care that no authority or dominion, ſuperiority or pre-eminence, dignifying or diſtinguiſhing ſhould take place among his diſciples and followers conſidered as ſuch. He has not only forbid it, but has repeated the prohibition over, and over, and over. *It ſhall not be ſo among you. Be not ye called Rabbi. Call no man your father upon the earth. Neither be ye called maſter.* This is the charge which Chriſt hath given; and therefore Reverend, Right Reverend, and Moſt Reverend Fathers in God, and all other badges of diſtinction, and marks of honour, pre-eminence, ſuperiority, or dominion, which take place in *Chriſtian ſocieties* conſidered as ſuch, and which ſerve to introduce

troduce a *groundleſs reſpect* and *veneration* for the perſons of men, and a *groundleſs ſubmiſſion* to their pretended authority, are not only *not Chriſtian*, but the moſt groſs *Antichriſtianiſm*, as they are ſet up in oppoſition to, and in defiance of Chriſt's authority, and his ſpecial charge and command to the contrary. I would not be underſtood to mean that Chriſtians as Chriſtians are not to render to their fellow Chriſtians *honour* even *double* honour to whom it is due, (that is to ſuch of their fellow Chriſtians who by their *virtue* and *good works* have rendered themſelves worthy of it), by ſhewing ſuch outward decent marks of reſpect as are agreeable to the uſages and cuſtoms of the age and place in which they live; but what I intend is, that no dignifying titles, nor other badges of diſtinction, which ſerve *only* to introduce a *groundleſs veneration* for the perſons of men as aforeſaid, are to take place in *Chriſtian ſocieties*, Chriſt having given a ſtrict charge to the contrary.

Among Chriſtians *conſidered as ſuch*, there is in reality no ſuch thing as ſuperior or inferior, greater or leſs; and therefore no diſtinction ought to be made. For whether the king upon the throne, or he that grindeth at the mill, whether high, or low, rich or poor, young, or old, whether of Jewiſh, or Gentile extraction, whether Scythian, Barbarian,

ſian, bond, or free, they are all one in Chriſt Jeſus; Chriſtians as Chriſtians being upon a foot of perfect equality, one not having any authority, ſuperiority, or pre-eminence over another. *Be not ye called Rabbi, for one is your maſter even Chriſt, and all ye are brethren.* If in a Chriſtian ſociety any man will be greater than others it muſt be, not by his having greater *poſſeſſions*, or greater marks of *honour* conferred upon him, or by exerciſing *dominion* over his brethren, theſe being *Antichriſtian* as I have already obſerved; but it muſt be in his *greater ſervices*, and in his being *more uſeful* in a Chriſtian ſociety than others, in imitation of his maſter, who *came not to be miniſtered unto, but to miniſter, and to give his life a ranſom for many.* In theſe reſpects a man may be as *great* among Chriſtians as he pleaſe, or as his circumſtances and abilities will enable him; but then this kind of greatneſs does not give him any authority, ſuperiority, or pre-eminence over his brethren.

In *civil* ſocieties diſtinctions, and pre-eminence, and authority may be neceſſary to anſwer the purpoſes of *civil* aſſociations; but in *Chriſtian* ſocieties the caſe is otherwiſe, theſe not being neceſſary to, but are ſubverſive of the true ends and purpoſes of ſuch *aſſociations*. Civil aſſociations are founded on *mutual indigence* and *dependence*, and conſequently

ſequently on *neceſſity*, and are intended to produce by law and government mutual aſſiſtance and protection: Chriſtian aſſociations are founded on *love* and *benevolence*, and a juſt ſenſe of *moral obligations*, and conſequently are *voluntary*, and are intended to produce by a friendly and brotherly affection and a juſt ſenſe of duty that mutual aſſiſtance and protection which in civil aſſociations are produced by law and government. *Self* aſſiſtance, *ſelf* defence, *ſelf* preſervation are in part the ground and foundation of *civil* ſocieties; that is, men enter into civil ſocieties and conſtitute a common intereſt partly from neceſſity, and out of regard to themſelves, their preſent indigent and dependent condition calls for that aſſiſtance and protection from others, which they in their turn afford to them. *Love*, and a *friendly* or brotherly affection, with a regard to what is *right* is the ſole ground of *Chriſtian* aſſociations, in which men are to *do good*, and *lend*, hoping for nothing again; that is, men are to perform every kind office to their neighbour from a principle of good will, and a ſenſe of duty, and not out of regard to themſelves, nor in expectation of a return of the like kindneſs, whatever their future condition may be. And as the *band* of civil ſociety is *law* and *government*, founded on *mutual indigence* and *dependence*;

ſo

ſo the *band* of Chriſtian ſociety is *mutual conſent* and *agreement*, founded on a *friendly* and brotherly affection, and a regard to *moral obligations.* So that whatever tends to weaken a friendly and brotherly affection among Chriſtians, that is ſubverſive of the true ends and purpoſes of Chriſtian aſſociation; but all diſtinctions, pre-eminence, and authority in a Chriſtian Society has ſuch a tendency, and therefore Chriſt hath ſtrictly forbid them.

SECT.

SECT. X.

AND as Chriſt laid a foundation for friendly ſocieties to anſwer the purpoſes before-mentioned; ſo he has for the moſt part left the *direction* of thoſe ſocieties, and their affairs to the *ſocieties themſelves*, or to *each member* thereof; he not having given in many caſes any particular directions concerning them. Thus, every one who is diſcipled to Chriſt is left to judge and chuſe for himſelf what *particular* ſociety of Chriſtians he will join himſelf to; Chriſt not having given any directions concerning it, neither has he inveſted any Chriſtian, nor any ſet, or order, or body of men among Chriſtians with power and authority to determine any one Chriſtian's practice herein. And tho' a man's *ſituation* in the world, and other circumſtances which may attend him may plainly point out to him *what particular* ſociety of Chriſtians he ought to join himſelf to; and tho' he may be juſtly *blameable* if he acts otherways: yet in this he is only anſwerable to *God*, and not to any of his

his *fellow* Chriſtians; becauſe not any of them are inveſted with authority to determine his judgment or practice with regard to this matter, or to force him to a compliance with what they ſhall judge right.

Thus again, every Chriſtian ſociety are left to judge and chuſe for themſelves who ſhall be their *Biſhop*; that is, who ſhall be their Monitor, their common Adviſer and Inſtructor, and their Repreſentative and Speaker in their publick and ſolemn addreſſes to God; Chriſt not having given any directions concerning theſe things, neither has he inveſted any Chriſtian, nor any body of men among Chriſtians with power and authority to judge and determine for any Chriſtian ſociety touching theſe matters.

Thus again, every Chriſtian is left to judge and chuſe for himſelf what *ſhare* he will bear of the expence that is neceſſary to ſupport the particular ſociety to which he belongs, and to anſwer the purpoſes of Chriſtian aſſociation. For tho' he has a rule to judge by, *viz.* his *own circumſtances* and *abilities*, and the *circumſtance* of the *ſociety* of which he is a member; and tho' he is anſwerable to *God* for his behaviour herein; yet he is perfectly free and at liberty with reſpect to all others; Chriſt not having inveſted any Chriſtian, nor any ſet, or order of men among Chriſtians with power and authority

authority to determine his practice herein, or to force him to a compliance with what they ſhall judge right. And therefore, tho' he is anſwerable to God for his actions in theſe reſpects; yet he is not anſwerable to any of his fellow Chriſtians. Every Chriſtian is ſuch *voluntarily* and of his *own* choice, independent of the will and determination of any other perſon, or perſons who may be ſuppoſed to chuſe for him, to force him, or to determine againſt him, as I have already obſerved; and therefore the obligations which a Chriſtian as ſuch lie under, are all *internal*, and not external; that is, his obligations ariſe from *within himſelf*, from a ſenſe of *duty*, and his being anſwerable to *God*, and not from any power or authority lodged in any other perſon, or perſons to determine what ſhall be his duty, or to force him to a performance of it, Chriſt not having delegated any ſuch power.

SECT.

SECT. XI.

BUT tho' Chriſt has in part left every Chriſtian ſociety to direct their own affairs, he not having given any particular directions concerning them in many caſes, nor delegated any the leaſt degree of power to any perſon, or perſons to command or direct them, or to judge or determine for them in thoſe caſes; yet he has in ſome other caſes given *inſtructions* and *directions* which every individual member of a Chriſtian ſociety ought carefully to conſider and attend to. Thus,

Chriſt has ſhewn what are the *moral* qualifications of diſcipleſhip to him, or what every man muſt *be*, and *do*, who would enter himſelf a member of a Chriſtian ſociety. Matt. xvi. 24. *Then Jeſus ſaith unto his Diſciples, if any man will come after me let him* (or he muſt) *deny himſelf*; that is, if any man will be my Diſciple or enter himſelf a member of a Chriſtian ſociety, he muſt *diveſt* himſelf of that *vicious* ſelf love, which is too commonly the ſpring of action in

men, and is the ground of moſt of the evils that take place in the world, and he muſt act from other principles, *viz.* from *benewlence* and a regard to what is *right*, theſe being the principles which Chriſt acted from, and the ſpirit he was actuated by. And as St *Paul* has juſtly obſerved, *Romans* viii. 9. *If any man has not the ſpirit of Chriſt, he is none of his*; that is, if a man is not actuated by the ſame ſpirit and principles which Chriſt was, then he is no Chriſtian. Again, *and take up his croſs*; that is, he muſt be ready and prepared to ſuffer any *evil* or *indignity* rather than *violate* his conſcience, or act *unworthy* of his character as a Chriſtian. Again, *and follow me*; that is, he muſt make *Chriſt's doctrine* and *example* the rule and meaſure of his affections and actions. And thus Chriſt ſhewed what were the *moral* qualifications of diſcipleſhip to him. Again,

Chriſt, in conformity to the *uſages* and *cuſtoms* of the world, and the *fondneſs* there is in the generality of men to *external* obſervances, and that his goſpel might as it were make a *ſenſible* impreſſion on the minds and lives of thoſe who took upon them to adhere to it appointed an *external action* to be performed when any perſon becomes his Diſciple, or enters himſelf a member of a Chriſtian ſociety, or at leaſt when any perſon is *proſelyted* from another to the Chriſtian religion.

religion. *Matt.* xxviii. 9. *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them,* &c. Which action, *viz.* of *waſhing in*, or *plunging a perſon under water* was intended to repreſent, not only that perſon's *ſeparation* from a vicious and wicked world, and his *devoting* himſelf to live a good and virtuous life, not only the *purity* and *ſpirituality* of the Chriſtian religion, which conſiſts in an *internal principle* that rightly directs and governs the affections and actions of men, in oppoſition to the *abominable ſuperſtitions* and *Idolatry* which took place among the *Gentiles*, and the *carnal ordinances* and *ceremonial purity* of the *Jews*; but alſo it was intended to ſhew both the *conviction*, and the *ſteady reſolution* of the perſon baptized. For by this action he declared (as far as an action is capable of expreſſing the ſenſe of a man's mind) that he believed our Lord Jeſus Chriſt was appointed and conſtituted of *God* to be *his guide* and *director* in matters of *religion*; that therefore he choſe him for his *maſter*; and that he was determined to be governed by his *laws*. And this was intended to be a check upon him all his life after, and to give occaſion to others to retort it upon him, if he ſhould at any time act unworthy of his Chriſtian profeſſion. Again,

As the life and death of Chriſt was intended to be an example and pattern for Chriſtians

to copy after in all ages, and as that Goſpel which he preached was intended to be both a ground and reaſon, and a rule of action to them: ſo Chriſt, that he might always preſerve a quick and an affecting ſenſe of *himſelf* and his *behaviour* upon the minds of his followers, and thereby lead them to an *imitation* of him; and alſo that he might conſtantly recal their *attention* to thoſe important *truths* which he had delivered to the world, and thereby rightly direct their affections and actions; and likewiſe that a ſenſe of his *ſufferings* and *death* (which was the higheſt act of benevolence, in that he laid down his life to promote the eternal good of mankind, and even of his greateſt enemies,) might be kept freſh upon their minds appointed *another external action* or *actions* to be performed, that in the conſtant uſe thereof his example both in life and death, and the great end he had in view, and thoſe momentous truths he delivered to the world, might be conſtantly brought to their remembrance, to awaken their attention, and to excite their imitation as aforeſaid. Thus Luke xxii. 19, 20. *And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave it unto them, ſaying, This is my body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me. Likewiſe alſo the cup after ſupper, ſaying, This cup is the new teſtament*

ment in my blood which is ſhed for you, (to which St Paul adds as Chriſt's own words, 1 Cor. xi. 25.) *this do ye, as oft as ye ſhall drink it, in remembrance of me.* In remembrance of me as your *Lord* and *Maſter*; who hath ſhewn you what is that *Rule* of *action* which you ought to govern your behaviour by, and what are the grounds of the divine favour and mercy to mankind: and therefore take care ſo to remember me, as to make thoſe important truths I have laid before you the ſpring and principle, and the rule and meaſure of your affections and actions. Do this in remembrance of me as your *great examplar*; who have walked before you in the paths of virtue, and ſhewn you by my example how you ought to behave in a variety of inſtances, and under various circumſtances: therefore ſo remember me as that your minds and lives may be conformed to that pattern I have ſet before you. Do this in remembrance of me as your *greateſt friend* and *benefactor*; who have ſpent my time and laboured abundantly to ſerve you, have expoſed myſelf to ſhame and ſuffering for your ſakes, and even laid down or am ready to lay down my life to promote your greateſt good: therefore ſo remember me as to preſerve an affecting and grateful ſenſe of my kindneſs and good-will towards you and ſuffering for you upon your minds; and ſo re-

member me, as in a particular and ſpecial manner to *imitate* that example of benevolence I have ſet before you, by performing every kind office to your neighbour, and by doing, and ſuffering, and even laying down your lives for each other, and for the publick good, when, and as far as the circumſtances of things ſhall in reaſon require it. Theſe are the gracious purpoſes which this inſtitution was intended to ſerve, and thus when it is rightly uſed according to the true intent of the inſtitutor, it becomes ſubſervient to the goſpel of Chriſt. And tho' this ordinance is moſt plain and ſimple in itſelf (the intention of it being plainly expreſſed in the inſtitution); yet a variety of myſteries have been extracted from it, and all ſorts of game and legerdemain tricks have been played upon it. Again,

As Chriſt propoſed his own example for his followers to imitate; ſo in a particular and ſpecial manner he recommended his *great condeſcenſion* in performing the meaneſt office to his diſciples, as moſt worthy to be copied after by his people. John xiii. 4, 5. *He* (*viz.* Jeſus) *riſeth from ſupper, and laid aſide his garments, and took a towel and girded himſelf. And after that, he poured out water into a baſon, and began to waſh his diſciples feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.* ver. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

So

So after he had waſhed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was ſet down again, he ſaid unto them, know ye what I have done to you, ye call me Maſter and Lord, and ye ſay well, for ſo I am. If I then your Lord and Maſter have waſhed your feet; ye ought alſo to waſh one anothers feet. For I have given you an example, that ye ſhould do as I have done to you: Verily, verily I ſay unto you, the ſervant is not greater than his Lord, neither he that is ſent, greater than he that ſent him. If ye know theſe things, happy are ye if ye do them. Here we ſee, not only that Chriſt exerciſed great condeſcenſion himſelf, but he alſo recommended it to his followers, *viz.* that they, in how high and exalted a ſtation ſoever, ſhould condeſcend to perform the meaneſt office to the meaneſt of their fellow Chriſtians if the caſe required it. Again,

Chriſt hath given the members of a Chriſtian ſociety particular directions how to act, when they behave *unworthily* toward each other; and that, with reſpect to the perſon *offending*, and the perſon *offended*. To the perſon offending his advice is, *Matt.* v. 23, 24. *Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there remembereſt that thy brother hath ought againſt thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; firſt be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer*

thy gift. The language and advice here is ſuited to the *Jewiſh* church, becauſe the Jewiſh *polity* was yet remaining; but when applied to a Chriſtian ſociety it is the ſame as if our Lord had ſaid, when thou comeſt to a Chriſtian ſociety to pay thy public acknowledgments to God, and there remembereſt that thy brother hath ought againſt thee, withdraw thy ſelf, and do not think to find acceptance with thy maker, whilſt thou are violating his laws, by treſpaſſing againſt thy brother. And therefore firſt go and be reconciled to thy brother, by making a ſuitable reparation for the injury done, repent of thy wicked action; and then come and pay thy reſpect to God with acceptance. To the perſon offended Chriſt's advice is, *Matt.* xviii. 15, 16, 17. *Moreover if thy brother ſhall treſpaſs againſt thee, go and tell him his fault between him and thee alone, if he ſhall hear thee, thou haſt gained thy brother; but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witneſſes every word may be eſtabliſhed. And if he ſhall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican;* that is, eſteem him no longer as a Chriſtian. Again,

Chriſt

Chriſt hath given Chriſtian ſocieties ſome cautions and directions with reſpect to their devotions. *Matt.* vi. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13. *But when ye pray, uſe not vain repetitions as the heathen do, for they think they ſhall be heard for their much ſpeaking; be not ye therefore, like unto them, for your father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye aſk him. After this manner therefore pray ye, Our Father, which art in heaven,* &c. Whether we conſider this as a *form* of prayer, or only as a *guide* and a *direction* to Chriſtian ſocieties with reſpect to the *object* and the *ſubject* of their prayers, and the *diſpoſitions* and *qualifications* of the perſons praying, and the *grounds* of their acceptance with God, it comes to the ſame; becauſe the ſame uſeful inſtructions are held forth in either caſe. Here Chriſtian ſocieties are taught to direct their deſires, not to any *mediator* or *interceſſor* with God, but to *God himſelf* their father in heaven, who as his power enables him, ſo his fatherly kindneſs diſpoſes him to do more abundantly for his dutiful children than they can aſk or think. Here Chriſtians are given to underſtand that the *foundation* of God's *moral* government and kingdom amongſt men, and the *foundation* of *Chriſtian* obedience is laid in the heart; by mens being poſſeſſed with a juſt and worthy ſenſe of the moral character of their maker. Here

Chriſtians

Chriſtians are taught to bound and confine their deſires to the *comforts* and *conveniencies* of life, (which is all that is worth ſeeking) and not to let them rove after the ſuperfluities and abundance of this world. And here Chriſtians are taught to expect that God will deal with them, not according to, or for the ſake, and on the account of the *merits* and *interceſſion* of his *ſon*; but according as they behave themſelves one to another. *Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.* Ver. 12. *For if ye forgive men their treſpaſſes, your heavenly father will alſo forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their treſpaſſes, neither will your father forgive your treſpaſſes.* Verſes 14, 15.

SECT.

SECT. XII.

FOurthly and laſtly, that the goſpel might be preached to *all nations*, and that the *Gentiles* as well as the Jews might be brought under its influence, and conſequently might ſhare in its benefits, Chriſt choſe *twelve men*, (of which one proved a *traitor* to him, and to fill up whoſe place *Matthias* was choſen), to be with him in his *preaching* and *miniſtry* among the *Jews*, to be *witneſſes* of what he both *taught* and *did*, and whom he intended to appoint and qualify to *preach* the ſame goſpel to the reſt of *mankind*. And accordingly, Chriſt, after he was put to death by the Jews and Romans, roſe again from the dead on purpoſe that he might ſtrictly charge and command, and that he might excite and enable theſe his Apoſtles to preach his goſpel as aforeſaid; and thereby purſue the great end and

purpoſe of his coming. *Luk.* xxiv. 26, 27, 28, 29. *Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Chriſt to ſuffer, and to riſe from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jeruſalem. And ye are witneſſes of theſe things. And behold I ſend the promiſe of my father unto you, but tarry ye in the city of Jeruſalem, until ye ſhall be endued with power from on high.* (This promiſe of the father, or the enduing them with power from on high, as it conſiſted in working miracles like as Chriſt had done before, and to anſwer the ſame end; ſo it was made good to them at the feaſt of *Pentecoſt* following.) *Mark* xvi. 15. *And he ſaid unto them, go ye into all the world, and preach the goſpel to every creature.* Matth. xxviii. 18, 19. *And Jeſus came and ſpake unto them, ſaying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth; go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them,* &c. To the perſons before-mentioned were afterwards added *two* more, viz. *Paul* and *Barnabas*, that in the exerciſe of their miniſtry up and down the world, theſe *fourteen Apoſtles* might offer to all without diſtinction the goſpel of Chriſt, and acquaint them with the true contents of it, and by their *example* and *perſwaſion* might invite and encourage others volun-

tarily to undertake and proſecute ſo gracious and good a work.

Chriſt having thus preached the goſpel to the Jews in his own perſon, having wrought a multitude of miracles to awaken their attention, and to ſtamp a divine character upon his preaching and miniſtry, having lived in a ſtrict conformity to that goſpel, and died a martyr for it, having laid a foundation for friendly ſocieties or families of love to anſwer the purpoſes aforeſaid, and having choſen and qualified, and having ſtrictly charged and commanded his Apoſtles to go out into the world and preach the goſpel to all without diſtinction, in a word Chriſt having done every thing that was proper to render his goſpel ſucceſsful, and to make it have its proper effects and influence upon the minds and lives of men; he then left it to make its way through, and to take its fate in the world. And indeed, when we conſider that the goſpel of Chriſt is founded in reaſon, and is ſtrictly conformable to our natural notions of things, and that it is nothing more than an addreſs to men, in order to engage them upon rational principles, to be wiſe for themſelves in an affair of the greateſt importance to them; in this view of the caſe, it might have been expected that the goſpel would have been univerſally received, and that all who

who received it would carefully frame and faſhion their minds and lives according to it. But alas! the event has ſhewn the caſe to be otherways; the grounds of which miſcarriage will be hereafter conſidered. And

Here, I beg leave to obſerve to my reader, that when the *Apoſtles* of our Lord *died*, the Apoſtolick office *died with them*, they having no ſucceſſors. *John* xx. 21. *As my father hath ſent me, even ſo ſend I you.* Here we ſee the utmoſt extent of the Apoſtolick commiſſion, namely, that it extended to the *perſons* of the Apoſtles, and no farther. Our Lord did not ſay, as my father hath ſent me, ſo ſend I you, and ſo do you ſend others, and they others, and ſo on to the end of the world; but he only ſaid, as my father hath ſent me, even ſo ſend I you. And though many after the example and by the perſwaſion and incouragement of the Apoſtles, might engage in the good work of *preaching the goſpel* to the *unconverted world*; yet in this they were volunteers, they not having any ſpecial call, nor any particular appointment from Chriſt to that work; and therefore they were not Apoſtles, nor were they ſo eſteemed. And as the *apoſtolick office ceaſed*, by, and at the death of the Apoſtles; ſo whatever *power* or *authority* the Apoſtles might be ſuppoſed to be inveſted with

with conſidered as Apoſtles, that *power* ceaſed, *by*, and *with* the ceaſing of the *Apoſtolick office* as aforeſaid. Moſt vain and aſſuming muſt it therefore be, for any man, or any ſet, or order, or body of men among Chriſtians, to pretend *ſucceſſorſhip* to the *Apoſtles*, to lay claim to any *Apoſtolical power* or *juriſdiction* upon that account, ſeeing the Apoſtles had no *ſucceſſors* as I obſerved above.

The Apoſtles indeed, (as the occaſion and circumſtances of things required, and the better to anſwer the purpoſes of Chriſtian aſſociation), did, *by*, and *with* the *advice* and *approbation* of the reſt of their *fellow Chriſtians*, appoint particular perſons, to perform *two* diſtinct offices in the ſeveral Chriſtian ſocieties which were gathered in their times; *viz.* that of *Deacons* and *Biſhops*. The former of theſe were appointed to take care of the *poor*, by collecting the ſociety's *bounty*, and *diſtributing* it faithfully as the neceſſities of the widows and others in diſtreſs call for it. *Acts* vi. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. *And in thoſe days, when the number of the Diſciples were multiplied, there aroſe a murmuring of the Grecians againſt the Hebrews, becauſe their widows were neglected in the daily miniſtrations. Then the twelve called the multitude of the Diſciples unto them, and ſaid, it is not reaſonable that*

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we ſhould leave the word of God, and ſerve tables. Wherefore brethren, look ye out among you ſeven men of honeſt report, full of the Holy Ghoſt, and wiſdom, whom we may appoint over this buſineſs. But we will give ourſelves continually to prayer, and to the miniſtry of the word. And the ſaying pleaſed the whole multitude: and they choſe Stephen, &c. And as the Apoſtles, when they had gathered Chriſtian ſocieties were obliged to leave them, in order to preach the goſpel to others: ſo this gave occaſion for their appointing particular perſons to perform in Chriſtian ſocieties the latter office I mentioned above, *viz.* that of *Biſhops*. Tho' *probably* this was done *by*, and *with* the *advice* and *approbation* of the reſt of their fellow *Chriſtians*; ſeeing that was the caſe of the former inſtitution of *Deacons*, the reaſonableneſs and uſefulneſs of the thing, and the circumſtances of Chriſtian ſocieties being the ground and foundation of both. The buſineſs of a Biſhop was to watch over a *particular ſociety of Chriſtians* (which were committed to his care), for their good; by ſeeing that every individual walked according to the goſpel of Chriſt, to reprove and admoniſh them if they in any inſtance behaved otherways, to excite and ſtir them up to the practice of virtue; in a word, the Biſhop

was

was to be a conſtant monitor to the people of their duty, to keep freſh upon their minds a juſt ſenſe of the doctrines of the goſpel, and to miniſter for them in their religious aſſemblies, by being their ſpeaker and repreſentative in their publick and ſolemn addreſſes to God. And,

The performing the office either of *Deacon*, or *Biſhop*, did not require any *great degree* of learning, or *long* and *tedious* ſtudy, or the being brought up at the feet of *Gamaliel*; but only a good underſtanding, with a juſt ſenſe of the goſpel of Chriſt, and of the great and good end it was intended to ſerve, an honeſty and integrity of mind, with a faithfulneſs of behaviour ſuitable to the truſt repoſed in them. The goſpel of Chriſt is a *plain, ſimple, uniform thing*; directed only to *one* great and good end, *viz.* the *ſaving of mens ſouls.* And tho' *great learning, tedious ſtudy*, &c. may be neceſſary to render men capable of *perverting* it, and making it ſubſervient to other, and contrary purpoſes than what it was intended for: yet theſe are not *neceſſary* to render men capable of undertaking it themſelves, nor yet to qualify them to preach it to others. Chriſt did not chuſe men of *letters only* to be his *Apoſtles*; that is, to publiſh his goſpel to the world, which was what the Apoſtolick

office conſiſted in; neither did the Apoſtles and Brethren chuſe men of *letters only* to be *Biſhops*; that is, to watch over the ſeveral Chriſtian ſocieties which were gathered in their times: great learning, tedious ſtudy, *&c.* not being neceſſary to the execution of thoſe offices. And when theſe came to be eſteemed neceſſary, then Chriſt and his goſpel were ſoon preached out of the world; that is, the goſpel of Chriſt was ſoon *perverted* and *abuſed*, and made ſubſervient to any, and every other purpoſe excepting the grand purpoſe for which it was intended, *viz.* the ſaving mens ſouls, tho' this was always pretended. And,

Tho' the Apoſtles and Brethren inſtituted the offices of Deacons and Biſhops in Chriſtian ſocieties; becauſe what theſe officers were to do was *neceſſary* to be done; and becauſe it was proper that it ſhould be ſome perſons *buſineſs* to do it that it might not at any time be *left undone*: yet it was not ſo their buſineſs as that it might not, or ought not at any time be done by any other perſon. To *collect* and *diſtribute* the ſociety's *bounty* was the buſineſs of the *Deacon*; but then it was not ſo his buſineſs as that it ought not, or that it would be criminal if it was done by any other perſon except ſome other circumſtance attended the caſe which made

it

it ſo. To *excite* and *ſtir up* the *Chriſtian brotherhood* to the practice of their duty, to reprove and admoniſh thoſe who behaved ill, and to be the *ſpeaker* for the ſociety in their publick addreſſes to God, and the like, was the buſineſs of a *Biſhop*; but then it was not ſo his buſineſs as that it might not, or ought not under any circumſtances to be done by any other perſon. And,

As the Apoſtles and brethren inſtituted the offices of Deacons and Biſhops in Chriſtian ſocieties to anſwer the purpoſes aforeſaid; ſo theſe offices may very fitly be ſaid to be of *apoſtolical appointment*; but then this will not juſtify our preſuming and calling them *Chriſt's inſtitutions*, or *divine inſtitutions*, becauſe we have nothing to *juſtify* ſuch a character, or to ground ſuch a *preſumption* upon. The Apoſtles, in obedience to the command given them by their maſter, went up and down the world preaching the goſpel, in the doing of which, many Chriſtian ſocieties were gathered; and as the Apoſtles were obliged to leave thoſe ſocieties in order to go on with that work they had a ſpecial call to, *viz.* of preaching the Goſpel; ſo they took care to leave them under *ſuch circumſtances*, and with *ſuch regulations* as that the true ends and purpoſes of Chriſtian aſſociation might be anſwered upon them; and theſe

were the *grounds* of the two inſtitutions before-mentioned. And therefore as I ſaid before, tho' this will *juſtify* our calling them *apoſtolical* inſtitutions; yet this does not afford or countenance the leaſt pretence for calling or eſteeming them *divine* inſtitutions, or the inſtitutions of *Chriſt*.

I would likewiſe obſerve to my reader how very unlikely it is that St *Peter* ſhould be conſtituted *Biſhop* of the particular ſociety or congregation of Chriſtians at *Rome*; becauſe he could not execute ſuch an office without *quitting* his *Apoſtleſhip*, and thereby betraying the truſt which Chriſt had repoſed in him of preaching the goſpel as aforeſaid. To do the work of an Apoſtle was to go from place to place *preaching* the *goſpel* to *all* without diſtinction, whether they were Jews or Gentiles, whether Scythians, Barbarians, Bond or Free. To do the work of a Biſhop was to *watch over* a *particular ſociety* of Chriſtians for their good, by teaching and inſtructing, by reproving and admoniſhing, and by performing every other good office towards them as was neceſſary to the well being of the ſeveral members of that ſociety; ſo that whoever did the latter could not do the former, becauſe theſe offices were incompatible. And therefore St *Peter* could not execute the office of *Biſhop* at *Rome* without

abandoning

abandoning his *Apoſtleſhip*, which ſurely is not to be ſuppoſed. But admitting for argument's ſake, that St *Peter* did quit his Apoſtolick office, and took upon him the office of a Biſhop, and that he was Biſhop of the particular ſociety of Chriſtians who inhabited in the city of *Rome:* yet nothing will follow from hence in favour of any *apoſtolical power* or *juriſdiction* which might be ſuppoſed to *deſcend from him* to *his ſucceſſors* the Biſhops of Rome, or to any other *Biſhop*, or *Biſhops* whatever; becauſe the Biſhop of Rome did not ſucceed St *Peter* in his *Apoſtolical*, but in his *Epiſcopal Character* only. Or if it ſhould be admitted that St *Peter* ſtill retained his Apoſtolick Character when he was Biſhop of *Rome*, tho' he did not in fact execute the office of an Apoſtle; yet this does not help the caſe at all. For as St *Peter* in the preſent caſe is ſuppoſed to ſuſtain a *two-fold character*, viz. that of an *Apoſtle*, and that of a *Biſhop:* ſo it is monſtrouſly abſurd to ſuppoſe that the powers he might be poſſeſſed of when conſidered in the capacity of an *Apoſtle*, ſhould deſcend to his ſucceſſors, when they ſucceeded him only in the capacity of a *Biſhop*. Moſt vain and aſſuming muſt it therefore be (as I ſaid before,) for the Biſhop of *Rome*, or any other Biſhop or Clergyman whatever to lay claim to the

power of the *keys*, let that power be what it will, or any other *Apoſtolical power* or *juriſdiction* whatever; ſeeing no ſuch power has, nor could be deſcended to them. The Apoſtolical *Commiſſion* extended no farther than the perſons of the *fourteen* Apoſtles I mentioned above; and therefore when the Apoſtles *dyed* the Apoſtolick office, and conſequently all Apoſtolick power and juriſdiction *dyed with them*, as I have already obſerved.

I would likewiſe farther obſerve how *weak* and *vain* the pretence is that the *Biſhops* and *Clergy* of the Church of *Rome* have been continued by a *regular uninterrupted ſucceſſion, from the Apoſtles down to this time*; whereas, if Father Paul's account of this matter (a man of great learning and integrity) may be relied upon, then the ſucceſſion of Biſhops and Clergy has been *greatly irregular*, and has been *twice at leaſt interrupted and broken in upon*. Thus in the Apoſtles *time*, and down to the end of the *ſecond* century thoſe appointed to any office in Chriſtian ſocieties were *elected* or ſet apart to their reſpective offices by the *body of Chriſtians*; that is, by that ſociety they were appointed to ſerve. See Father Paul of beneficiary matters, *pages* 5, 6. " Reſerving therefore to themſelves, *(viz.* the Apoſtles,) the more im-

" portant charge of preaching and teaching " the goſpel; they committed the care of " their temporals to other miniſters."—— " Theſe new miniſters inſtituted by the A- " poſtles, for the management of their tem- " poral affairs, were ſix in number, choſen " by the whole body of the faithful, and " called Deacons."——" And this order of " admitting none to any Eccleſiaſtical Fun- " ction, but by election of all the faithful " in a general Aſſembly, was inviolably ob- " ſerved, and ſo continued for above 200 " years."——Here we ſee that not only the *right*, but alſo the *practice of electing* was in the *people* or body of the faithful for the *firſt two hundred years* and longer. And tho' the uſing or applying the outward mark or ſign of ſuch election or ſeparation of a perſon to any office in a Chriſtian Society, by *laying on of hands*, and *praying* for God's bleſſing upon the perſon and labours of him that was ſeparated, was performed by the *Biſhop* or Overſeer of that, or of ſome other Chriſtian ſociety; yet that does not affect the caſe at all; becauſe this is to be conſidered, not ſo much the act of the Biſhop, as the *act* of the *Society* or Congregation whoſe miniſter and repreſentative he was, in the performance of that action; and becauſe what was done by the Biſhop, was not the act of *ſeparation*

itſelf, in whole, or in part, but a mere *appendix* to it, and an outward *ſign* or *token* of it. Thus we find that Chriſt choſe his *twelve* Apoſtles, *Mark* vi. 7. and thus he ſeparated and ſent forth his *ſeventy* Diſciples to preach the Goſpel through *Judea*, Luke x. 1. and the chuſing of theſe out of or from amongſt others to anſwer the purpoſe aforeſaid, was a *ſufficient ordination*, without any *external token* or *ceremony*, which does not appear to be added in either caſe. Thus again, the Apoſtles and Brethren, (the number of which were about an *hundred and twenty*,) appointed *two*, viz. *Joſeph* and *Matthias*, and left it to be determined by lot which of thoſe ſhould ſucceed *Judas* in the *Apoſtolick office*; and when that was done *Matthias* was numbred with the *Apoſtles*, and it does not appear that laying on of hands, or any other ceremony was uſed in the caſe. This I think plainly ſhews, that laying on of hands by the Biſhop, on perſons ſet apart to miniſter in Chriſtian ſocieties, was not a *neceſſary part* of ſuch ſeparation; but a mere *appendix* to it. And though when the *Deacons* were choſen by the *multitude*; that is, by the body of the faithful then preſent, *Acts* vi. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. the Apoſtles *prayed*, and in conformity to *antient uſage*, (for it does not appear, that they had any divine directions ſo to do,) they laid

laid their *hands* on the perſons ſo ſeparated: yet that *ceremony* does not appear to be a *neceſſary part* of ſuch ſeparation, but only an *outward ſign* or *token* of it. And though laying on of hands has been called *ordination*; yet this was only a *figure of ſpeech* in which the *ſign* is put for the *thing ſignified.*

After the *ſecond* century the affair of electing perſons to miniſter in Chriſtian ſocieties admitted of ſome ſmall alteration, *viz.* ſometimes the Clergy took upon them to *nominate* perſons for Eccleſiaſtical Functions; but then ſuch nomination was no more than barely to *recommend*, it being of no effect but as the perſons nominated were approved and accepted by the *body of the people.* Thus again Father *Paul* of beneficiary matters, *Pages* 20, 21. " The Prieſts, Deacons, and " other Clergy were alſo preſented by the " people, and ordained by the Biſhop; or " elſe nominated by the Biſhop, and with " the conſent of the people ordained by " him. No perſon that was unknown was " admitted, nor did the Biſhop ordain any, " but ſuch as were approved, or indeed pro- " poſed by the people, whoſe concurrence " was thought ſo neceſſary, that the Pope, " St *Leo*, proves at large the invalidity of a " Biſhop's ordination without it. And *Con-*

ſtance

" *ſtance* being choſen Biſhop of *Milan* by " the Clergy, St *Gregory* thought he could " not be conſecrated without the conſent of " the inhabitants, who being at that time " retired to *Genoa*, to avoid the ravages of " the barbarous nations, a meſſage was firſt " ſent them, at his inſtance, to know their " pleaſure. A thing which may juſtly be re- " commended to the obſervation of this age, " where we are taught that elections, where- " in the people ſhould pretend to have any " ſhare, would be unlawful and invalid: ſo " changed, and ſo inverted are cuſtoms, as " to make good and evil change their names, " calling that lawful which was formerly " reputed deteſtable and impious, and that " unjuſt which had then the reputation of " Sanctity." And,

Thus things continued till about the year 500: after which time, the power of electing men to miniſter in Chriſtian ſocieties was by degrees taken from the *People*, and transferred to thoſe inveſted with *civil power*. See Father Paul of beneficiary matters, *Pages* 24, 25, 26, 27. " But after the year 500, " the Biſhops being become the abſolute diſ- " penſers of the fourth part of the Goods " of the Church, they began to imploy " more of their care on their temporal af- " fairs, and to make Parties in the cities:

ſo

" ſo that elections were no longer carried
" on with a view to the ſervice of God, but
" managed by faction, and intrigues, which
" often proceeded to open violence. This
" gave the firſt alarm to Princes, who had
" hitherto little concerned themſelves in the
" choice of the miniſtry."—— " Moved
" therefore, partly by religious conſidera-
" tions, and partly by reaſons of ſtate, they
" now began not to ſuffer the Clergy and
" People to determine elections by them-
" ſelves, and according to their own paſ-
" ſions. For ſeeing men now no longer
" avoiding and flying from Biſhopricks, but
" even made intereſt for them with all the
" courtſhip and ſkilful ſolicitations they could
" uſe; ſo great a change opened a way to
" factions, and conſequently to ſeditions,
" and ſometimes bloodſhed at the inſtiga-
" tion of the contending parties."—" Theſe
" diſtempers produced an Edict, that no
" Perſon elected ſhould be conſecrated with-
" out the approbation of the Prince or Ma-
" giſtrate, reſerving to themſelves the right
" of confirming the great Biſhopricks, ſuch
" as thoſe in *Italy* of *Rome*, *Ravenna*, and
" *Milan*, and leaving the care of others to
" their Miniſters."—— " In this manner,
" that is with the imperial ſanction, the
" Popes and Biſhops continued to be cho-
" ſen

" ſen in *Italy* until the Year 750: but in " *France* and other Countries beyond the " mountains, the royal authority, and even " that of the Mayors of the Palace, appear- " ed more abſolute; for the People as ſoon " as thoſe Princes concerned themſelves in " elections, deſiſted entirely, and withdrew " themſelves from them."—— " Through " all the hiſtory of *Gregory* of *Tours*, from " the time of *Clowis* the firſt Chriſtian King " of *France*, until the year 590, we find no " inſtance of any one Biſhop being made " in any other manner than by the nomi- " nation or conſent of the King."—— " It was eaſy for thoſe Biſhops when once " they were made without the authority of " the People, to exclude the People alſo from " the choice of Prieſts, Deacons, and other " eccleſiaſtical miniſters, and to transfer that " right to the Prince alone." Here we ſee, that the *ſucceſſion* of *Biſhops* and *Clergy* was become *greatly irregular*, and was moſt ſhamefully *interrupted* and broken in upon. For inſtead of their being choſen and ſet apart to their reſpective offices by the *people*, whom they were appointed to watch over, and miniſter to, which in *reaſon*, and according to *antient* uſage they ought to be; they were ſet apart by thoſe inveſted with *civil power*; and this *broke* the *ſucceſſion*, and

rendered it *greatly irregular*. And ſuppoſing the external ſign or ceremony of *laying on of hands*, and *praying* for the perſon ſet apart, was performed by the Biſhops, as in times paſt, and according to antient uſage; yet the *ſucceſſion* of *Biſhops* and *Clergy* was notwithſtanding *greatly irregular*, and that ſucceſſion was as effectually, and as truly *interrupted*, as if a change had been made in the *ceremony* alſo, or in the *adminiſtration* thereof. The *Crown* of *Poland* is well known to be *elective*. Now ſuppoſe a perſon were to accede to that crown any other way than by that of election, this would be *greatly irregular* according to the *conſtitution* of that *kingdom*, and the *ſucceſſion* in that caſe would be *greatly interrupted* and broken in upon, even though the viſible ſign of *anointing*, or any other *cuſtomary ceremony* be continued, and adminiſtred by the *ſame perſon*, or *perſons*, and in the *ſame manner* as heretofore. This I think is ſo plain as not to admit of a diſpute; and the caſes are parallel.

After this the affair of elections ſuffered another change, and by degrees the *Clergy* poſſeſſed themſelves of that power, and wholly excluded both *Prince* and *people*. Thus again Father Paul of beneficiary matters, *Page* 56. " But the Poſterity of *Charle-*

" *maign*

" *maign* having been driven out of *Italy*
" in the year 884, Pope *Hadrian* III or-
" dained, that the Popes ſhould, for the
" future, be conſecrated without applying to
" the Emperor at all. *Page* 88. The Em-
" peror being yet young, and *Germany* all
" in commotions, this juncture invited the
" Pope, to exclude him intirely from the
" election of the Biſhops and Abbots, and to
" that end ſent him a monitory; whereby
" the Emperor was forbid to concern him-
" ſelf any more in thoſe diſpoſitions. *Pages*
" 106, 107. Finally, in that ſpace of time
" between the years 1122 wherein *Henry* V
" renounced the inveſtitures, and 1145, it
" became a rule almoſt every where eſta-
" bliſhed, that upon the Death of the Biſhop,
" his ſucceſſor ſhould be choſen by the
" Chapter, and confirmed by the Metropo-
" litan: that the Abbots ſhould be choſen
" by the Monks and then confirmed by the
" Biſhop, if the Monaſtery were not ex-
" empted, and if it were, then the Pope
" was to be applied to for his confirmation.
" That the other benefices which were *de*
" *Jure Patronatus*, ſhould be conferred by
" the Biſhops upon the preſentation of the
" Patron: but that all the reſt ſhould be at
" the entire diſpoſal of the Biſhops. There
" remained indeed the chief election of all,

" the

" the Popedom, which ſeemed not to fall " under any regulation; for after the Em- " peror had been excluded from the election, " inſtead of its returning to the people, " which was a conſequence ought to have " been expected, *Innocent* II, upon a quar- " rel betwixt him and the *Roman* people, " in which he was driven out of *Rome*, in " return, took away the right of election " from the people." Here we ſee, that the affair of *electing* or ſeparating men from their brethren in a Chriſtian ſociety, to *miniſter* in, and to that ſociety, was again *interrupted* and broken in upon. For inſtead of their being choſen and ſeparated by the *people*, according to *reaſon*, and *moſt antient uſage*; or inſtead of their being ſeparated by thoſe inveſted with *civil power*, according to the *uſage* of the *times immediately preceding*; the *Clergy* by degrees poſſeſſed themſelves of that power, and has kept it ever ſince; and this again rendered their *ſucceſſion greatly irregular*. How *idle* and *vain* therefore muſt the pretence be, of a *regular uninterrupted ſucceſſion* of Biſhops and Clergy in the Church of *Rome*, from the *Apoſtles* down to *this time*; whereas according to Father Paul's account, it has in fact been juſt the contrary. And, if the *pretence* of ſuch a *ſucceſſion* be *idle* and

vain

vain in the Biſhops and Clergy of the Church of *Rome*; then that pretence muſt be equally ſo in *all others* who have derived their ſucceſſion from them.

SECT.

SECT. XIII.

HAving before ſhewn what was the *great end* of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt's coming into the world, and likewiſe what he has *done* in order to obtain it: I now proceed to ſhew that the means Chriſt made uſe of were *ſuitable* and *proper* to obtain the end propoſed, *viz.* the ſaving of mens ſouls. And in order to do this I ſhall ſhew *firſt*, that the means Chriſt made uſe of were ſuitable and proper to *reform the world*, and rightly to *direct* and *govern* the *affections* and *actions* of men: and *ſecondly*, that the reforming, and rightly directing and governing the minds and lives of men was the only *poſſible way* in which Chriſt could be a *ſaviour* to them. And

Firſt, I am to ſhew that the means Chriſt made uſe of were ſuitable and proper to *reform the world*, and rightly to *direct* and *govern*

vern the *minds* and *lives* of men. And here I obſerve that as Chriſt addreſſed himſelf to men as *free* beings; ſo what he had to offer to them was founded upon the conſideration of a *Deity*. By a Deity I mean a governing mind, who called this world into being, who takes cognizance of the actions of men, and who will call them to an account for the ſame, and deal with every one according to his works. And tho' the bulk of mankind were *groſsly corrupted* with reſpect to their *underſtandings*, their *affections* and *actions* when Chriſt undertook to reform and ſave them; yet the ſenſe of a *Deity*, or of ſuch a governing mind as I have now mentioned was ſtill preſerved and kept alive among them, as is abundantly evident from the many ſuperſtitions and idolatries that every where prevailed. And indeed, it muſt be a very hard thing quite to *raze* out of mens minds the ſenſe of a Deity; becauſe the preſent dependent condition of every one, the beauty and order that is to be ſeen in the creation, the tendency and ſubſerviency of its ſeveral parts to a general good, and the like, do naturally and almoſt unavoidably make the ſenſe of a Deity preſent to mens minds.

But

But tho' the ſenſe of a governing mind was not, neither could be eaſily loſt in the world; yet moſt mens conceptions of God were ſo *groſs* and *unworthy*, and a juſt ſenſe of his *moral character*, and his *moral government* were ſo far loſt as to anſwer but little purpoſe to them, with regard to their reformation, or to the rightly directing and governing their affections and actions. Men, from a *falſe* and unworthy ſenſe of *God*, went into *falſe* ways of *pleaſing* him; and upon a ſenſe of their guilt, they took *wrong meaſures* to recommend themſelves to the *divine mercy*. So that tho' the ſenſe of a Deity was not loſt among men; yet ſuch a ſenſe of his moral perfections, and his moral government was ſo far loſt as to anſwer but little purpoſe to them; that is, their ſenſe of a Deity did not naturally lead them to a *reformation* of their evil ways, nor afford ſuch a *ground* or *reaſon* of action to them as would rightly direct and govern their minds and lives. And,

As this was the unhappy condition of the *bulk* of mankind, and as our Lord Jeſus Chriſt took upon him to be their *reformer*, and in conſequence thereof to be their *ſaviour*: ſo it behoved him to ſet men *right* in theſe matters, by impreſſing upon their

minds ſuch a juſt and worthy ſenſe of God, and of the true grounds of his approbation and diſlike, and the meaſures which he will moſt undoubtedly take with our ſpecies, as when ſeriouſly attended to naturally tends to *reform* the *vices*, and rightly to *direct* and *govern* the *minds* and *lives* of men. And as this was what the circumſtances of mankind required; ſo this was what our Lord did for them in order to their reformation, *&c.* namely, he publiſhed his goſpel to the *Jews* in his *own perſon*, and gave it in charge to his Apoſtles to publiſh the ſame goſpel to the *reſt of mankind*, which goſpel (as I have already obſerved) is briefly ſummed up in the following particulars. *Firſt*, he requires and recommends a conformity of mind and life to that eternal and unalterable rule of action which is founded in the reaſon of things, and makes or declares that compliance to be the only, and the ſole ground of divine acceptance, and the only, and the ſure way to life eternal. *Secondly*, if men have lived in a violation of this righteous law, by which they have rendered themſelves diſpleaſing to God, and worthy of his juſt reſentment; then Chriſt requires and recommends repentance and reformation of their evil ways as the only, and the ſure grounds of the divine mercy

mercy and forgiveneſs. And *Thirdly*, Chriſt aſſures us that God has appointed a time in which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, and that he will then approve or condemn, reward or puniſh every man according to his works; that is, according as he has, or has not conformed his affections and actions to that rule of action beforementioned, and according as he has, or has not repented and amended his evil ways.

This is the true goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt. This is that goſpel which bringeth peace and ſalvation to every one who believes it, and makes it a principle of action to himſelf. This is that goſpel, by the *publication* and *reception* of which Chriſt propoſed to *reform the world*, and rightly to *direct* and *govern* the *minds* and *lives* of men. And indeed, nothing could be better ſuited to anſwer ſuch a purpoſe than the goſpel here referred to; for were men to act under a *well-grounded perſwaſion*, and with a *ſerious regard* to thoſe truths, then it would not fail of producing the forementioned effects. This was the caſe at the beginning of Chriſtianity, the goſpel then wrought *wonders* in the world; that is, a well-grounded perſwaſion, and a ſerious regard to the truths beforementioned wrought a *wonderful change* upon the minds and lives

of men. The moſt fierce and cruel of our ſpecies became mild, gentle and compaſſionate; the moſt leud and debauched became chaſt and temperate; the moſt ſelfiſh and avaritious became benevolent and liberal. In a word, the goſpel, that is, the propoſitions beforementioned, (which are the ſum and ſubſtance of the goſpel of Chriſt) when believed and ſeriouſly regarded wrought ſuch a change in the affections and actions of men, as by a figure of ſpeech was called a *new birth*, and a *new creation*, and the perſons upon whom this change was wrought were ſaid to be *born again*, and to be *created again in Chriſt Jeſus*, and the like. And,

As the goſpel wrought ſuch a change, and produced ſuch effects upon the minds and lives of men *heretofore*; ſo it would produce the ſame effects *now*, were men to believe and regard it as they did then, by making it a principle of action to themſelves. Alas! to believe the goſpel now, is only to aſſent to thoſe particular propoſitions, *viz.* that *Chriſt's perſon* and his *miſſion* are *divine*, in oppoſition to *Pagans*, *Mahometans*, *Jews* and *Deiſts*, who poſſibly may ſome of them diſpute thoſe points: and not ſuch a well-grounded perſwaſion, and ſuch a ſerious regard to the truths beforementioned, (which

are

are the contents of the goſpel) as become a principle of action in the believer, in oppoſition to that *vice* and *corruption* which prevails in the world, and which the goſpel of Chriſt was intended to reform. Had men now a well-grounded perſwaſion, and did they pay a ſerious regard to the following truths, which contain the true goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt, *viz.* that nothing but a conformity of mind and life to that rule of action which is founded in the reaſon of things can poſſibly render them pleaſing and acceptable to God; that nothing but repentance and reformation of their evil ways can poſſibly recommend vicious wicked men to the divine mercy; and that God will moſt certainly call us all to an account for our preſent behaviour, and will deal with every man according to his works; I ſay, had men a well-grounded perſwaſion, and did they pay a ſerious regard to thoſe truths, this would work wonders *now*, as well as *heretofore*. But alas! the caſe is quite otherways now, as believing the goſpel, and believing in Jeſus Chriſt is now become quite another thing. And,

Here I humbly beg my reader to conſider, were the *generality* of men to act under a well-grounded perſwaſion, and with a ſerious regard to the truths beforementioned, what *effects* it would produce upon their affections and actions, and what manner of perſons they would be. Surely the caſe would then, be vaſtly different from what it is now; becauſe a ſerious regard to thoſe truths naturally leads men to conſider what they are about, and to act with *caution* in whatſoever they ſet their hand unto, as their *higheſt intereſt* is manifeſtly concerned therein. A ſerious regard to thoſe truths would conſtantly call in mens *attention*, and this would prevent their running *haſtily* into any thing that is evil; becauſe then they would have time to conſider whether a preſent enjoyment (which upon the whole is wrong, and therefore ought to be avoided), is worth purchaſing at the loſs of God's favour, and the happineſs of another world. A well-grounded perſwaſion and a ſerious regard to the forementioned truths, would naturally lead men to *look forward*, and conſider what *part* in life they ought to act; and this again would lead them to *watch* againſt thoſe temptations by which they might be betrayed. In a word, the world would then of courſe put on another face, and mankind would

would be ſo changed for the better, as to be quite otherwiſe than what at preſent they appear to be. And this would be the caſe of all ranks and conditions of men, from the king upon the throne to the meaneſt of his ſubjects. Every man, who acted under ſuch a perſwaſion, and with a regard to the forementioned truths, would be careful honourably to *fill up every relation* he ſtood in to others, make good *every obligation*, and *faithfully diſcharge every truſt* repoſed in him. Then, thoſe who are intruſted with the power of making *laws* for the good and well-being of a community, would in their legiſlative capacity take heed, not to *exceed*, nor yet to *betray* the truſt repoſed in them. Then, the courts of princes would not be turned into *puppet-ſhews*, and the wealth of nations waſted in ſupporting thoſe ſhews; but they would be the *ſeat of judgment*, in which iniquity would not be found, where every *complaint* would be heard, and every *grievance* among the people impartially redreſſed. And this would be the caſe with reſpect to all eſtates and conditions of men, the belief of the goſpel of Chriſt would be ſuch a ſpring and principle of action in them, as would diſpoſe every one to act *ſuitably* to his character whatever it were. And

If

If we conſider men under the power of *vicious affections*, and *long contracted habits of ſin*, ſurely, nothing is more likely to work their *reformation* than the true goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt. For were ſuch men fully convinced of, and could they be prevailed upon to pay a ſerious regard to the truths beforementioned, truths in which they are ſo deeply intereſted, and which ſo nearly concern them, this would *melt down* the moſt *hardened* and *obdurate* of them all. For, if nothing but a conformity of mind and life to that rule of action which is founded in the reaſon of things will render men pleaſing to God; and if nothing but repentance and reformation of their evil ways will recommend vicious wicked men to the divine mercy; and if God will moſt aſſuredly judge the world in righteouſneſs, and render to every man according to his works (which is the ſum and ſubſtance of the goſpel of Chriſt); then, where thoſe truths are believed upon mature conſideration, and a ſerious regard is paid to them, this naturally tends to *bear down* the moſt *inveterate habits of vice*, and is more than a *counterpoiſe* to the *ſtrongeſt temptations*, and conſequently leads to *reformation* the moſt *hardened ſinner*. Thus a well-grounded perſwaſion and a ſerious regard to the truths beforementioned naturally tends

tends to reform the world, and rightly to direct and govern the minds and lives of men; and theſe would be the bleſſed effects of the goſpel of Chriſt were it generally believed and regarded as it ought to be.

SECT.

SECT. XIV.

HAVING in the preceding ſection fully ſhewn that the true goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt is excellently ſuited to reform the world, and rightly to direct and govern the minds and lives of men: I now proceed to ſhew *ſecondly*, that the reforming the world, and rightly directing and governing the affections and actions of men was the only *poſſible way* in which Chriſt could be a *Saviour* to them. And in order to do this I beg leave to obſerve, that it is *agreeableneſs* or *diſagreeableneſs* in any agent, which alone renders that agent (conſidered as an agent or free being) the object of divine *approbation or diſlike*. God does not approve or diſapprove from capricious humour or arbitrary pleaſure; but from the real and intrinſick valuableneſs or unworthineſs of the object of ſuch his approbation or diſlike. Were

Were God to approve or diſapprove of any object upon any *other account*, from any *other motive*, or upon any *other ground*, than the real intrinſick valuableneſs or diſagreeableneſs of that object, this would be a manifeſt *moral imperfection* in the Deity: becauſe then, God would not only be capable of being, but he would be actually *miſled*, by his being led to approve or diſapprove of what is not the true and proper object of his approbation or diſlike; and by his being led to affect and act upon *wrong* and *falſe principles*, to admit which would be to defame the moral character of the beſt of beings, and therefore it is not to be ſuppoſed. To approve or diſapprove of what is not in it ſelf the true and proper object of ſuch approbation or diſlike, is in the nature of the thing manifeſtly wrong; and therefore ſuch a conduct muſt be *unworthy* of the Deity. This, I think, is as plain and evident as any mathematical propoſition can be demonſtrated to be; and therefore I ſhall not proceed farther to explain a point which appears ſelf-evident to the loweſt underſtanding.

Mankind in the general were groſsly corrupted both with reſpect to their underſtandings, their affections and actions, when our Lord undertook to reform them (as I

have already obſerved), and this rendered each one *perſonally diſpleaſing* to his maker, as each one was become the proper object of divine diſlike. Every one who had behaved groſsly unworthy of, and unſuitable to his character, and who had thereby diſappointed the very end of his creation; did by this means render himſelf perſonally diſpleaſing to his maker, and the proper object of his reſentment. For as man is a *free* being who has the direction of his own actions, and as he is endowed with a diſcerning and reaſoning faculty which when carefully uſed and attended to would in the general rightly direct his underſtanding, his affections and actions, (excepting in difficult and perplext caſes, in which he would be liable to err, and conſequently to act wrong, and which wrong behaviour his kind creator would not unreaſonably take an advantage from): ſo this puts it into every man's *power*, and leaves it to his *choice* to behave well, or ill; to render himſelf perſonally pleaſing, or diſpleaſing to God; and conſequently to be the proper object of divine favour, or reſentment. And,

As the generality, or at leaſt a great part of our ſpecies had made a *wrong* choice, had by their ill behaviour rendered themſelves perſonally diſpleaſing to their maker,

and

and by that means were become the proper objects of his reſentment: ſo there was no other poſſible way in which Chriſt could be a ſaviour to them, but by his working a *perſonal change* in them, or rather by his recommending ſuch momentous *truths* to their conſideration, as when ſeriouſly attended to would diſpoſe and engage them to *reform themſelves*, and work in them ſuch a change as would make them ceaſe to be the proper objects of divine diſlike and reſentment, and become perſonally pleaſing to God, by being thereby the proper objects of his favour. I ſay, this was the only poſſible way in which Chriſt could be a ſaviour to mankind; becauſe this was the only poſſible way in which he could render men perſonally pleaſing to their maker, and the proper objects of divine regard. It was mens vicious and wicked behaviour *only* which rendered them perſonally diſpleaſing to God, and which made them the proper objects of his reſentment; and therefore there was nothing in nature but mens *reformation* and their *right behaviour* which could poſſibly render them perſonally pleaſing to him, and make them the proper objects of his favour. God is eternally and unchangeably the ſame, he always likes or diſlikes as the being which is liked or diſliked is in itſelf the proper object

of one or the other. So that, if there be at any time a *change* with reſpect to the divine *approbation* or *diſlike*, the ground of that change, is not, nor cannot be in God, who is unchangeable; and therefore muſt be in the *ſubject* upon whom it is exerciſed; that is, if God at any time *ceaſes* to diſapprove the being which he did diſapprove, and *likes* the ſame being which before he diſliked; then, that being muſt be ſo *changed*, as to ceaſe to be the proper object of his diſlike, and become the proper object of his approbation and affection. So that if we have by our miſbehaviour rendered ourſelves perſonally diſpleaſing to God, and are become the proper objects of his diſlike and reſentment, we muſt unavoidably continue to be perſonally diſpleaſing to him, and to be the proper objects of his diſlike and reſentment, until ſuch a change is wrought in us, which is done by our *repentance* and *reformation*, as that we ceaſe to be the proper objects of his diſlike and reſentment, and become the proper objects of his approbation and affection. I ſay, this muſt needs be the caſe; becauſe were God to like or diſlike upon any other grounds, it would be manifeſtly wrong, and therefore the ſuppoſition is not to be admitted. Were God to take up a reſentment againſt any of his creatures upon any other grounds

grounds than their having *behaved ill*, which is the only proper ground for reſentment, this would be wrong; or were he to ſhew mercy to and forgive ſuch tranſgreſſors as had rendered themſelves the proper objects of his reſentment, upon any other grounds, than their *repentance* and *reformation*, which in ſuch a caſe, would be the only proper ground for mercy and forgiveneſs, this would be wrong alſo; and therefore it is not to be ſuppoſed.

If then, our Lord Jeſus Chriſt would be a *ſaviour* to mankind he muſt *reform* them, and muſt rightly direct their *minds* and *lives*; becauſe there was no other poſſible way in which he could render them perſonally pleaſing to God, and conſequently no other poſſible way in which he could be a *ſaviour* to them. If he had lived to the age of *Methuſelah*, and had behaved all that time in the beſt and moſt perfect manner poſſible, and if he had died a death a thouſand times more *painful* and *ſhameful* than what he did, this might have rendered him in his *own perſon* ſo much the more pleaſing and acceptable to his father, as he hereby might become ſo much more the proper object of divine regard; but this could not poſſibly render any *other perſon* more or leſs pleaſing to God, becauſe no other perſon could here-

by become more or leſs the proper object of his favour. What is perſonally pleaſing in one agent, cannot poſſibly render another agent pleaſing to God; becauſe that other does not thereby become the proper object of it; more eſpecially if the latter be *in himſelf* perſonally diſpleaſing to God, and is the proper object of his reſentment, which is the caſe of *vicious wicked men* antecedent to their repentance and reformation. And if wicked men repent and amend their ways, then they by this change ceaſe to be perſonally diſpleaſing to God, and become in themſelves perſonally pleaſing to him, and the proper objects of his favour; and conſequently they do not need any thing that is perſonally pleaſing in another to make them ſo.

Beſides, it is very abſurd, and a ſhameful affront to the majeſty of heaven to ſuppoſe that God *removes* his diſpleaſure and takes into his *favour* one agent, for what was perſonally pleaſing in another; becauſe this ſuppoſes him to act upon *wrong* and *falſe principles*. The *right behaviour* and the *ſufferings of Chriſt*, have no more connexion with, nor relation to any *other perſon*, ſo as to be a ground or reaſon for God to ſhew favour or kindneſs to that other perſon; than *colour has* to *ſound*. The right behaviour and the

ſufferings

ſufferings of Chriſt rendered him *perſonally valuable*, and as ſuch he became hereby perſonally pleaſing to his father; but then they could not do ſo by any *other perſon*, becauſe they were no ways, nor in any ſenſe *his*, nor bore any *relation* to him; and becauſe every other perſon continued *the ſame* as to his perſonal valuableneſs or diſagreeableneſs, and conſequently was the *ſame object* of divine approbation or diſlike, *after* the right behaviour and the ſufferings of Chriſt as *before*; ſo that the good works or ſufferings of Chriſt could not poſſibly make any *alteration* in the caſe. And,

As the reforming the world, and rightly directing and governing the minds and lives of men, was the only poſſible way in which Chriſt could be a ſaviour to them: ſo this was the only way in which he *propoſed* to be their *ſaviour*, and this was the only *method* he purſued in order to obtain that end. He tells *ſinners* plainly that except they *repent* they will *all periſh*; and that the true and only way to life eternal is to *keep the commandments*; and that if they *do this* they *ſhall live*; and the like. This is the *true* goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt. As to the ſaving mankind by the *imputed righteouſneſs*, or the *meritorious ſufferings*, or the *prevailing interceſſion* of Chriſt, theſe are doctrines which

Chriſt never taught, and are what Chriſt never pretended to ſave men by; but were methods of ſalvation ſet up by *men* who have called themſelves *his followers*. And theſe methods of ſaving mankind, as they are of *human invention*, and are no part of the goſpel of Chriſt: ſo they naturally and manifeſtly tend to *ſubvert* it, as I ſhall ſhew hereafter.

SECT.

SECT. XV.

HERE it may be natural for my reader to aſk, that if the goſpel of Chriſt is founded in reaſon, and is exactly conformable to our natural notions of things, and if it be a proper expedient to reform the world, and rightly to direct and govern the minds and lives of men, and if this is the only poſſible way for men to ſecure to themſelves the divine favour, and the happineſs of another world, and the moſt likely way to obtain peace and happineſs here; then how came it to paſs that when the goſpel was *firſt preached*, it was not *univerſally received*? and how comes it to paſs that where it *is received*, it does not *generally* have its *proper* effect and influence upon the *minds* and *lives* of men? But on the contrary, *Chriſtians* in general appear to be like *other people*, having the *ſame vices* and *corruptions* prevailing among

among them. The ſame pride and arrogance; the ſame tyranny and cruelty; the ſame fraud and oppreſſion; the ſame covetouſneſs, diſſimulation, intemperance and the like, are to be found among *Chriſtians*, as are among *other men*. So that the main difference betwixt *Chriſtians* and *Mahometans*, *Jews* and *Pagans* ſeems to be in *name* and *profeſſion* only, and in the *different rituals* of their ſeveral religions. And tho', where Chriſtianity has taken place it may poſſibly have introduced more *learning* and *knowledge*, and better *order* and *decency* among men; yet even this, it is to be feared, has been ſubſervient to render the *villanies* among Chriſtians *more completely* ſo, and to make men more *dexterouſly* and *decently vicious*. Theſe are queſtions, which as they are nearly related to the point in hand; ſo I preſume my reader will not be tired, if his attention ſhould be retained, whilſt they are particularly conſidered. And

Here I am to enquire, how it came to paſs that when the goſpel was *firſt publiſhed* to the world, it was not *univerſally received*. And ſurely, if my reader would but conſider how many *difficulties* it had to encounter with, and how many kinds of *oppoſition* were likely to be made to it, he would not be ſurprized to find that it made

no

no greater progreſs than it did. For as the goſpel of Chriſt is an addreſs to men as *free* beings, which have the direction of their own actions, and as ſuch it muſt be left to every man's *choice* whether he would *hear*, or whether he would *forbear*; whether he would *attend* to it, or whether he would ſet his *face* againſt it: ſo conſequently it could not be *forced* upon the world, but muſt make its way by mere dint of *reaſon* and ſtrength of *argument*. Indeed the *miraculous* power which attended the goſpel at its firſt publication, was deſigned to *alarm* the world, and to call in mens ſerious *attention* to what was kindly offered to them, and to ſtamp a *divine* character upon it; and upon many it had its intended effect. But then, with multitudes of others the caſe was otherways; men found out ways to take off the *force* of this alarm, by aſcribing that power to *other cauſes*, and the like. So that the generality of men were ſo far from being brought over to the goſpel of Chriſt, that on the contrary, they made *great oppoſition* to it, the grounds of which oppoſition I come more particularly to conſider. And

Firſt, as the world lay in *wickedneſs*, and men had contracted *long habits* of vice: ſo this diſpoſed many to oppoſe every thing

which might give a check to their enjoyments, or that might introduce any uneaſineſs into their minds. And as the goſpel could not work upon men until they could be prevailed upon ſeriouſly to reflect upon, and carefully attend to it: ſo ſad experience ſhews how *hard* and *difficult* a thing it is to bring men who have given a looſe to their appetite and paſſions to reflect ſeriouſly upon their conduct, or carefully to attend to any thing which may be offered againſt it. Alas! to attempt to bring ſuch men to *ſerious reflection* and conſideration, is like attempting to bring a *bear* to the *ſtake*, or putting a *knife* to a man's *throat*, and therefore too too many are apt to *ſtart back*. And as the goſpel when carefully attended to, muſt greatly *diſturb* the minds of wicked men, by repreſenting to them as in a glaſs the *vileneſs* of their behaviour, the *wretchedneſs* of their condition, and the *dreadful conſequences* which will unavoidably follow upon it, except their repentance and reformation prevent it: ſo it is no wonder that many of them *ſtopt* their *ears* againſt it, and refuſed to hearken to *that voice* which ſpake not *good* concerning them but *evil*. And tho' the goſpel of Chriſt is excellently ſuited to reform vicious men; yet it does not do it by way of *charm*, but by *moral ſwaſion*, men muſt

muſt reflect ſeriouſly upon the contents of it, and carefully attend to it, for otherways it can have no effect or influence upon their minds and lives, which wicked men are not eaſily, nor generally prevailed upon to do. So that when we conſider how hard and difficult a thing it is to bring vicious men to ſerious reflection, and how few there are who will be brought to it, it will not appear ſtrange that Chriſtianity made no greater progreſs in the world than it did. Again, this will farther appear if we conſider

Secondly, that the goſpel of Chriſt lays the ax to the *root* of the tree, and (if I may ſo ſpeak) it gives no quarters; that is, it does not admit of any thing to be the *ground* of God's favour but the practice of moral virtue, or a conformity of mind and life to that rule of action which is founded in the reaſon of things; and it admits of nothing to be the *ground* of Divine Mercy and forgiveneſs but repentance and reformation of mens evil ways. Whereas moſt other religions have ſome *kind* and *favourable ſalvo's* annexed to them, ſomething to help men out at a dead lift, ſomething to offer to God inſtead of a right behaviour and repentance and reformation of their evil ways, and by which they are led to hope that they ſhall find acceptance with him, tho' they have

have nothing perſonally valuable in themſelves to recommend them. Moſt other religions have provided for their adherents either *coſtly ſacrifices*, or *painful penances*, or *tedious pilgrimages*, or *bowings* and *proſtrations*, or *frequent watchings*, *waſhings*, *faſtings* and *prayers*, or a ſtrict regard to *rites* and *ceremonies*, or the *good works*, the *ſufferings*, or the *interceſſions* of others, or ſomething which mens wealth or power can procure for them to be the grounds of their acceptance with God, and of their obtaining the divine mercy. So that let men live as *viciouſly* as they pleaſe, and tho' they go on and perſiſt in their *wicked* courſes; yet ſtill there is *ſomething* to fly to, ſomething to render the practice of vice *eaſy* to themſelves, and to give them *hope* even to the laſt. Whereas the goſpel of Chriſt does not admit of any thing of this kind, it has provided no ſuch *ſalvo's* for *ſinners*, neither does it afford any ſuch grounds of *hopes* and *comfort* to *wicked men*. But on the contrary it requires and obliges men to become *perſonally* valuable in themſelves, to become *worthy* of, and to be the *proper* objects of divine regard; and it declares mens *perſonal* valuableneſs to be the *only*, and the *ſole ground* of their acceptance with God. And if men have behaved unworthily, then it requires and declares

clares mens *repentance* and *reformation* of their evil ways to be the *only*, and the *ſole ground* of the divine mercy and forgiveneſs. This being the caſe that men were already in the poſſeſſions of religions which were ſo *favourable* to their *vices*, and which offered them grounds of *peace* and *comfort* whilſt they *indulged* their vicious inclinations; it is no wonder that they *were not* in the general given to change, or that they ſhould *violently oppoſe* Chriſtianity which would *bereave* them of thoſe *comforts*; and conſequently it is not to be wondered at that the goſpel of Chriſt made no greater progreſs than it did. Again

Thirdly, the prejudices which many men took up againſt Chriſtianity ariſing from *education*, *preconceived opinions*, and the like, were ſo ſtrong, as to bear down every thing which might be offered in its favour: ſo that the very *novelty* of the thing, was ſufficient to introduce a great oppoſition to it. Religion with many becomes *hereditary*, and like mens eſtates deſcends from *father* to *ſon*; and many men are ſo exceeding tenacious of opinions which they have received by, and from their forefathers, (tho' taken up upon very ſlight grounds,) that they are not eaſily prevailed upon to part with them. Conſtant experience ſhews the *force* and *power* which

education

education and preconceived opinions has on the minds of men, in ſo much that moſt people follow the *ſame cuſtoms*, go into the *ſame opinions*, and ſtrictly adhere to the *ſame religion* which their parents and anceſtors were of before them, without examining the grounds upon which they proceeded. Or if they do examine, it is ſo *ſlightly* and *partially* as to be of no effect to them; each one preſuming they are in the *poſſeſſion* of *truth*, antecedent to their inquiries about it. Thus generally the *children* of Jews are *Jews*, the *children* of Mahometans are *Mahometans*, and the *children* of Chriſtians are *Chriſtians*, each one abiding by *that religion* he has been *educated* in. The caſe is the ſame with reſpect to the ſeveral denominations among Chriſtians, the *children* of Papiſts are generally *Papiſts*, even tho' they live in *Proteſtant* countries where the *ſuperſtitions* and *abſurdities* of Popery have been very much *expoſed*; the *children* of Proteſtants are *Proteſtants*; and amongſt theſe the *children* generally embrace the *ſame tenets*, and join with the *ſame ſect* their *parents* did before them. And this was too too much the caſe when the goſpel was kindly offered to the world; mens prejudices ariſing from education and preconceived opinions ran ſo high, as to be with many a *bar* to

their

their conviction and converſation. This was the caſe among the *Jews*; they could not bear with any thing which ſeemed to leſſen the value of *that religion* which they had received from their anceſtors; and this diſpoſed them violently to *oppoſe* the goſpel. And this was the caſe alſo among the *Gentiles*; each ſet of people paid ſuch a *ſacred regard* to the religion they had been *educated* in, as not only prevented them from attending to, but alſo led them ſtrenuouſly to *oppoſe* whatever might be offered againſt it; and conſequently this introduced among the *Gentiles* great *oppoſition* to the goſpel of Chriſt. So that when this is taken into the caſe, it is not to be wondered at that the goſpel made no greater progreſs than it did. Again

Fourthly, thoſe who have been intruſted with, or who have taken upon them the care and government of *civil* ſocieties, have many of them by a *ſtretch* of power *provided* and *impoſed* a religion upon their people, and thereby have given them a rule of action in religious matters to walk by, and appointed what ſhall be the grounds of their acceptance with God. This I call a ſtretch of *power*, becauſe the *nature* and *ends* of government do not *authoriſe* nor *juſtify* them in ſo doing. For whatever *right* civil

governours may have to *propoſe* and *recommend*, yet ſurely they have *no right* to *force a religion* upon their people; becauſe as authority and government are *founded* upon, ſo they are *limited* and *bounded* by the grounds and reaſons, and by the ends and purpoſes of civil aſſociation. And as men do not enter into civil ſocieties in order to gain or ſecure to themſelves the favour of God and the happineſs of another world, but only to *gain* and *ſecure peace* and *happineſs here:* ſo from hence it will follow that to *command* and *govern* the judgments and actions of men in matters of religion is not the province of the civil magiſtrate; becauſe men do not enter into civil ſociety to anſwer theſe purpoſes, and becauſe the favour of God, and the happineſs of another world (which is the buſineſs of *religion* to ſecure) ſociety and government can neither give, nor ſecure, nor take away. But this is what I have elſewhere (*) more largely conſidered, to which I refer my Reader. And,

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(*) See my Diſcourſe on the grounds, and extent of authority and liberty, with reſpect to civil government. Wherein the authority of civil magiſtrates in matters of religion, is particularly conſidered. Occaſioned by Dr *Rogers*'s vindication of the civil eſtabliſhment of religion. Price 6 *d.* And in my Collection of Tracts page 453.

As the civil magiſtrates have ſometimes provided, and impoſed a religion upon their people: ſo they have endeavoured to ſecure the peoples ſubmiſſion, by *threatning* and *inflicting* the ſevereſt pains and penalties. And by this means the moſt groſs abſurdities and ſuperſtitions have been pinned down upon the people from generation to generation, without any hope or proſpect of a reformation; becauſe to attempt any alteration in ſuch religious eſtabliſhments, is like digging up foundations, and turning the world up-ſide down: ſo that the civil eſtabliſhment of religion, excluſive of a general toleration, is not only wrong and unjuſtifiable in itſelf, but alſo it is the *greateſt bar* to all reformation in religion. And this was the caſe at the *firſt* publication of the goſpel, the power of the civil magiſtrate which ſhould have been imployed in the protecting and defending the Apoſtles in the quiet and peaceable exerciſe of their miniſtry, was turned againſt them. Thus Herod the king ſtretched forth *his hand to vex certain of the church, and he killed James the brother of John with the ſword, and becauſe it pleaſed the Jews, he proceeded farther to take Peter alſo.* Acts xii. 1, 2, 3. And as the eſtabliſhed religions which took place in the world at the

firſt preaching of the goſpel, did many of them abound with abominable *ſuperſtitions* and *idolatries*, which of courſe the goſpel of Chriſt muſt *condemn*, as it is ſhewed that none of thoſe *falſe ways* of recommending men to God, would be ſufficient to anſwer that purpoſe: ſo this engaged the civil magiſtrates of thoſe times againſt Chriſtianity, and drew on the profeſſors of it the moſt heavy and bloody perſecutions, which ſurely, was no *ſmall check* to the progreſs of the goſpel. For tho' the ſufferings of innocent perſons might *awaken* the *attention* of ſome, and thereby be a means of bringing them over to Chriſtianity (which gave occaſion for that proverb, viz. the blood of the Martyrs is the ſeed of the Church): yet ſurely, it gave a terrible fright to many others, and kept them at the greateſt diſtance from it. And if we add this to the former conſiderations, it will not appear ſtrange, that the goſpel made no greater progreſs than it did. Again

Fifthly, religion has always been a *foundation* for men to build a *profitable trade* upon; that is, men of ſelfiſh views have made it ſubſervient to the purpoſes of worldly power, wealth, and grandure to themſelves; and theſe I call the *intereſted in religion*. This, I think, has been the caſe in all ages and

and countries, and it is notoriouſly ſo at this day. Religion is too often principally made ſubſervient to the wealth, and power, and grandure of thoſe who take upon them to have the direction and management thereof. And tho' the *profeſſed* deſign of the intereſted in religion is to ſecure to others the favour of God, and their happineſs in another world: yet the *real* deſign, and what they *ſteadily purſue*, is their own power, and wealth, and every other advantage which they can poſſibly gain, or ſecure to themſelves in this. And as the profitable trade which religion affords, is chiefly ſupported by the *weakneſs*, *ignorance*, and *bigottry* of the people: ſo the managers in matters of religion, do, many of them, take all poſſible care to keep them ſo. And accordingly a *padlock* has been too often put upon the underſtandings of men, and it has been deemed *damnable* for them to enquire any farther into matters of religion, than the intereſted in that ſcience ſhall pleaſe to direct or give leave. *Eccleſiaſtical courts*, and courts *Inquiſition* have been likewiſe ſet up, in order to ſtrike an *awe* upon the minds of the people, and to *check* and *reſtrain* all enquiries into matters of religion; and to *correct* and *puniſh* all thoſe who ſhall preſume to *deviate* from that ſtandard of truth, which

the directors and managers in matters of religion have given them. And if at any time the peoples attention have been awakened, and they have been called upon to look a little farther into matters of religion, than the ſtandard given them would admit; then preſently the intereſted in religion ſound an alarm of *danger*, then the *church* is in danger, or *religion* is in danger, or *hereſy* prevails, or *infidelity* prevails, or ſomething like it is given out, to *intoxicate* the minds, *inflame* the paſſions, and *ſtir up* the reſentment of the *weak* and *bigotted* multitude; and by this means, ſometimes, ſuch a *fire* has been kindled in a nation, as has not been eaſily quenched. And,

As ſome of thoſe who have been intruſted with the care and government of civil ſocieties, have attempted at ſuch power over their people, as exceeded the bounds of reaſon; and as thoſe who have taken upon them to direct and manage in matters of religion, have often been *too apt* and *ready* to lend them their helping hand to procure it: ſo (as one good turn deſerves another,) thoſe intruſted with civil power, have made uſe of that power to *confirm* and *eſtabliſh* to the managers of religious matters that wealth, and power, and grandure which they have unreaſonably aſſumed to themſelves.

ſelves. And thus likewiſe (when the directors in matters of religion have thought it neceſſary for the ſupport of their power and intereſt, and have been pleaſed to call for it,) the civil magiſtrates have ſometimes uſed that power, which ought to have been imployed in *protecting* and *defending* the people in the quiet and peaceable enjoyment of their own, in providing *faggots*, and *gibbets*, and other *ſeverities*, to correct and puniſh all thoſe who ſhall dare to deviate or diſſent from that ſtandard of truth, which the managers of religion, by the help of the civil magiſtrate, have impoſed upon them. So that of all the *kinds* of oppoſition which have been at any time made to the *reforming* the world, that which has come from the *intereſted* in religion, has always been the *greateſt* and *ſtrongeſt*. And,

This was the caſe at the *firſt* publication of the goſpel, the *chief prieſts* and others among the Jews, who were either *intereſted* in the thing, or *influenced* by thoſe that were, theſe *inflamed* the paſſions, and *ſtirred* up the reſentment, not only of the *ignorant* and *bigotted multitude*, but alſo of the *civil magiſtrates* againſt our ſaviour; which ended in that bloody and barbarous ſcene of his crucifixion and death. And neither the *ſoundneſs* of Chriſt's doctrine, nor the *inno-*

cency of his behaviour, nor the abundant *goodneſs* and *benevolence* of his actions, nor yet the authority and power of his *miracles*, were ſufficient to ſecure him from that *rage* and *madneſs*, which the intereſted in religion had ſtirred up againſt him. And as the intereſted in religion made great oppoſition to the miniſtry of Chriſt: ſo they did the ſame to that of his Apoſtles. Thus we read *Acts* iv. 1, 2, 3. *And as they* (viz. Peter and John) *ſpake unto the people, the prieſts, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jeſus the reſurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold.* Verſes 6, 7. *And Annas the high-prieſt, and Caiaphas, and John, and Alexander, and as many as were of the kindred of the high-prieſt were gathered together at Jeruſalem. And when they had ſet them in the midſt, they aſked, by what power, or by what name, have ye done this.* Chap. v. 17, 18. *Then the high-prieſt roſe up, and all that were with him, (which is the ſect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the Apoſtles, and put them in the common priſon.* And, as the intereſted in religion among the Jews, made great oppoſition to the goſpel of Chriſt: ſo the caſe

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was the ſame among the Gentiles, religion being made ſubſervient to worldly purpoſes, as well among the latter, as the former. Thus we read *Acts* xix. 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28. *And the ſame time there aroſe no ſmall ſtir about that way, for a certain man named Demetrius, a ſilver-ſmith, which made ſilver ſhrines for Diana, brought no ſmall gain to the craftſmen, whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and ſaid, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. Moreover you ſee and hear, that not only at Epheſus, but almoſt throughout all Aſia, this Paul, hath perſwaded and turned away much people, ſaying, they be no gods which are made with hands. So that not only this our craft is in danger to be ſet at nought: but alſo that the temple of the great goddeſs Diana ſhould be deſpiſed, and her magnifience ſhould be deſtroyed, whom all Aſia and the world worſhip. And when they had heard theſe ſayings, they were full of wrath, and cryed out, ſaying, great is Diana of the Epheſians.* So that when we conſider what great oppoſition was made to Chriſtianity, by thoſe who were *intereſted* in the ſeveral religions which then took place in the world, it is no way ſurpriſing that the goſpel made no greater progreſs than it did.

Sixthly and laſtly, the goſpel itſelf very ſoon becauſe *corrupted* and *depraved*, there being many *abſurd* doctrines and *ſuperſtitious* practices annexed to, and blended with it, and theſe were dignified with that ſpecious title the *Goſpel* of *Chriſt*. And in particular Chriſtianity became corrupted in that grand principle of all true religion whether natural or revealed, *viz.* the *Unity* of *God*; and this, not only became a *bar* to mens receiving it, but it gave occaſion for that *great defection from it* which has ſo far, and ſo long prevailed in the world, commonly called *Mahometaniſm*. The profeſſors of Chriſtianity likewiſe degenerated from that *plainneſs* and *ſimplicity*, that *honeſty* and *integrity*, and from that ſpirit of *love* and *benevolence* by which they were to be *known*, and by which Chriſtianity was to be *recommended* to the world; and became *aſſuming* and *domineering*, *contentious* and *quarleſom*, *ſelfiſh* and *avaritious*, and every evil work prevailed amongſt them. In ſhort, the religion of Chriſt, or rather the religion which was called after his name became like the reſt of the religions which took place in the world; that is, it conſiſted rather in *externals*, and in *ſhew* and *appearance*, than in an *internal principle* which rightly directs and governs the *affections* and

and *actions* of men: and the *profeſſors* of it were in the general *like other people.* So that Chriſtianity had little left to recommend it to the ſenſible and more diſcerning part of mankind; and this tended to check and hinder the progreſs of it.

Thus I have put together the ſeveral things which ſtood in the way of the goſpel, to prevent its ſucceeding in the world; and if we conſider the caſe in this view, I think it will not appear ſtrange, that it made no greater progreſs than it did.

SECT. XVI.

I HAVE in the preceding ſection ſhewed how it came to paſs, that the goſpel of Chriſt when it was firſt preached did not univerſally prevail: I now proceed to enquire how it comes to paſs, that with reſpect to thoſe who *do receive* it and make a *profeſſion* of it, yet notwithſtanding, it has not generally had its *proper* effect and influence upon their *minds* and *lives*. And in order to do this I beg leave to repeat what I have already obſerved, *viz.* that the goſpel of Chriſt is an addreſs to men as free beings, by recommending to their moſt ſerious conſideration certain doctrinal propoſitions taken from the conſideration of a Deity, the ſum of which is contained in the following particulars. *Firſt*, that nothing but a conformity of mind and life to that eternal and unalterable rule of action which is founded

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in the reaſon of things, will render men pleaſing and acceptable to God. *Secondly* that nothing but repentance and reformation of mens evil ways, will recommend ſinners to the divine mercy. *Thirdly*, that God has appointed a time in which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs, and that he will approve, or condemn, reward, or puniſh every man according as he has, or has not conformed his affections and actions to that righteous rule before-mentioned, and according as he has, or has not repented and amended his evil ways. And as theſe propoſitions when believed, and ſeriouſly regarded, are excellently ſuited to reform the world, and rightly to direct and govern the minds and lives of men, by being a proper ground or reaſon of action to them: ſo whatever doctrines or practices have taken place among Chriſtians, which either immediately or mediately tend to *weaken*, or *take off* the *perſwaſive influence* of thoſe propoſitions, ſuch doctrines and practices do manifeſtly tend to *pervert* the goſpel of Chriſt, and more or leſs to render it *unſucceſsful* upon the minds and lives of men. What thoſe doctrines and practices are, I come now more particularly to conſider, tho' I ſhall not take notice of all, but only of ſuch as principally and eminently do

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Firſt,

Firſt, the doctrines of the *imputed righteouſneſs*, the *meritorious ſufferings*, and the *prevailing interceſſion of Chriſt* being either ſeparately, or conjunctly the *grounds* of mens acceptance with God, and of ſinners obtaining divine mercy, theſe doctrines do naturally tend to *weaken* and *take off* the perſwaſive influence of the goſpel, and to render it of *none effect*; as by them is pointed out to men *another* way to God's favour and mercy, and *another* way to life eternal than the *goſpel* has pointed out unto them; and conſequently, the aforeſaid doctrines render the doctrine of the goſpel an uſeleſs and an inſignificant thing. I put theſe *three* doctrines together, becauſe they pervert the goſpel of Chriſt the ſame way. I ſay pervert the goſpel. For if perſons can be prevailed upon to believe that men are rendered acceptable to God, and that ſinners are recommended to the divine mercy, not on the account of their being in themſelves the ſuitable and proper objects of either; but only on the account of the right behaviour, the ſufferings, and the interceſſion of Chriſt, whether it be by either, or all of theſe (though one would think that if *one* of theſe did the work, neither of the other *two* would be neceſſary): then the conſequence is clear, that to perſons ſo perſwaded there cannot appear any *neceſ-*

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ſity for them to become perſonally valuable in themſelves by a right behaviour and by repentance and reformation of their evil ways, becauſe if men are rendered acceptable to God, and are recommended to his mercy by the *former*, then the *latter* cannot be neceſſary to that end, and then the recommending of, or inſiſting upon the latter to perſons thus perſwaded can have *little* or no *effect* upon their minds or lives, becauſe the *force* of the *argument* is taken away, and thus the perſwaſive influence of the goſpel is weakened if not deſtroyed thereby. And,

This is very conſiſtently acknowledged by the *Antinomians*, who profeſſedly maintain not only that the righteouſneſs, the ſufferings, and the interceſſion of Chriſt are the ſole grounds of the divine favour and mercy to men; and that their own right behaviour, and their *repentance* and reformation are not *neceſſary*, nor any way ſubſervient to that end: but alſo that if men hope or expect to obtain the divine favour and mercy on the account of their own *good works* or *repentance*, this is the *high road* to *deſtruction*, as ſuch hope and expectation *leſſens*, or *takes off* the *merit* of Chriſt's righteouſneſs, his ſufferings and interceſſion; and likewiſe the *freeneſs* of the divine

divine mercy and grace to mankind. And that the aforeſaid doctrines have not only ſuch a *tendency*, but alſo *have*, and *do in fact* weaken, or take off the perſwaſive influence of the forementioned propoſitions which contain the true goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt, I dare appeal to the experience of the *preſent* and *paſt ages*, as evincing the truth of it; there having been, and ſtill being multitudes of perſons profeſſing Chriſtianity, who *indulge* themſelves in a vicious courſe of life, and yet *hope*, and *truſt*, and *rely upon Chriſt*, (as they call it,) for ſalvation to the laſt. And tho' they have nothing perſonally valuable in themſelves to recommend them, and tho' they are the ſuitable and proper objects of the divine diſlike and reſentment; yet as they have been taught that the *true grounds* of the divine favour and mercy to men, are the righteouſneſs, and ſufferings, and the interceſſion of Chriſt; ſo they *preſume* with great confidence that *through theſe* they ſhall be *ſaved*, than which ſurely nothing can be more abſurd. Thus the forementioned doctrines do naturally tend to pervert the goſpel of Chriſt, and to render it an uſeleſs thing; as they tend to weaken, and take off that perſwaſive influence which otherwiſe it might have upon the minds and lives of men. And thus

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readers will ſee how it comes to paſs, that where the goſpel has been received and profeſſed, it has not generally had its intended effect. And

This ſurely is worthy the moſt ſerious conſideration of all thoſe who are by profeſſion *preachers* of *Chriſt* and his goſpel; becauſe the work which they are engaged in, is not a trifling affair, but is of the *laſt importance* to mankind. Chriſtian Miniſters are to repreſent to the people the *true grounds* of the divine favour and forgiveneſs, and the *true* and *only way* to life eternal; it therefore moſt certainly behoves them to take great heed to their miniſtry *rightly* to fulfil it. For whoever points out to men *another way* to God's favour and eternal life, than Chriſt hath pointed out; ſuch an one preaches *another goſpel*, he is a *deceiver* in points of the greateſt importance (whether he intends it not), he is an *Antichriſt*, and a *betrayer* of mens ſouls. And as the doctrines I have now been conſidering, *viz.* the imputed righteouſneſs, the meritorious ſufferings, and the prevailing interceſſion of Chriſt are repreſented to be, what they really are not, *viz.* the true grounds of the divine favour to men, and of the divine mercy to ſinners: ſo to repreſent them *as* [illegible]*b*, and to *teach men ſo*, is in truth to

preach another goſpel than Chriſt hath preached, and to point out to men *another way* to God's favour and life eternal than *Chriſt* hath pointed out unto them. I have already ſhewn what are the true and only grounds of our acceptance with God, and what are the true and only grounds of the divine mercy and forgiveneſs to ſinners, *viz.* our being prevailed upon by the goſpel, to become the ſuitable and proper objects of it, by a right behaviour, and by repentance and reformation of our evil ways: this is what the goſpel of Chriſt *declares*, and this is what the reaſon of things *require*, and were God to act upon any other principles, that is, were he to be pleaſed with men, or ſhew mercy to ſinners upon any other grounds, this would be running *croſs* to nature, and acting from *unworthy* motives, and conſequently, would be a manifeſt *moral imperfection* in him.

I am ſenſible, that the forementioned doctrines are ſaid to be contained in the *writings* of the *Apoſtles*, and more eſpecially that doctrine of the meritorious ſufferings of Chriſt being the ground of God's ſhewing mercy to ſinners; but this is not to be admitted. The Apoſtles had a great regard to their countrymen the *Jews*, which diſpoſed them to ſtudy and make uſe of

the ways they could to bring them over to Chriſtianity. And as the *Jews* paid a great regard to *Moſes*'s *law*: ſo the Apoſtles endeavoured to *aſſimilate* the goſpel to it, that thereby it might be rendered more *acceptable* to thoſe *Jews*. And as the Apoſtles (in conformity to the uſage of thoſe eaſtern countries), ſometimes delivered themſelves in *high* and *lofty figures* of ſpeech: ſo they ſometimes borrowed thoſe figures from the *figurative actions* which were appointed under the diſpenſation of *Moſes*. Figurative actions I call them, becauſe in truth they were no other. Thus we read, *Leviticus* xvi. 21, 22. *And Aaron* (and conſequently the high prieſts which ſucceeded in after times), *ſhall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confeſs over him all the iniquities of the children of Iſrael, and all their tranſgreſſions in all their ſins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and ſhall ſend him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderneſs: and the goat ſhall bear upon him all their iniquities into a land not inhabited, and he ſhall let go the goat in the wilderneſs.* Theſe I ſay were *figurative actions*, becauſe if we underſtand them *literally*, they are very abſurd, ſeeing the *ſins* of the people were not capable of being *collected together*, and then *ied off* in this manner. For it is not

to be ſuppoſed, that *Aaron* went over the camp, or that the *high prieſts* (after him) went over the nation of *Iſrael*, and by a kind of *ſuction* drew all the ſins of the people into their own *breaſts*, and then *breathed* them out again upon the *head* of the goat, or that they gathered together the *ſins* of the people, and bound them in *bundles*, and laid them on the head of the goat, to be carried into the wilderneſs, there to be loſt; like as tradeſmen bind their *wares* in bundles, and lay them on horſes, to be carried away to market. Theſe I ſay are *abſurd* ſuppoſitions, and therefore, the *actions* here referred to, muſt be conſidered as *figurative* actions. And as the expreſſions in the writings of the Apoſtles which relate to the preſent queſtion, were many of them taken from ſuch figurative actions as took place among the Jews: ſo thoſe expreſſions are plainly *figures* of ſpeech, and ought thus to be underſtood, for were ſome of them to be taken in a *literal* ſenſe, they would not be reconcileable to *truth* nor *common ſenſe*, as might eaſily be made appear, but that is beſide my preſent purpoſe.

Beſides, as the expreſſions referred to are moſtly contained in the *writings* of St *Paul*: ſo were I to *riſk* the whole upon his *authority*,

thority, ſuppoſing him to be the author of the *Epiſtle to the Hebrews*, I ſhould even then *gain* my point. Thus, *Heb.* x. 4. *For it is not poſſible that the blood of bulls and goats ſhould take away ſin.* Now the proper queſtion is, wherein lies the *impoſſibility* of the *blood* of *bulls* and *goats* taking away *ſin?* or how comes it to be impoſſible that the blood of thoſe creatures ſhould do it? And the anſwer is manifeſt, *viz.* that it is impoſſibility in nature for the blood, that is, the ſhedding the blood of bulls and goats to render a ſinner *leſs a ſinner*, or *leſs the object of God's diſpleaſure* than he was before; and conſequently, it is impoſſible that the blood of bulls and goats ſhould take away ſin. The caſe is exactly the ſame with reſpect to the blood, that is, the ſhedding the blood of Chriſt, or any other blood whatever, it being as much an impoſſibility in nature for the blood of Chriſt to render a ſinner *leſs* a ſinner, or *leſs* the object of God's diſpleaſure, as it is that the blood of bulls and goats ſhould do it; and conſequently it is as much impoſſible that the blood of Chriſt, as it is that the blood of bulls and goats ſhould take away ſin. But this is too plain to be inſiſted on any farther. But then

Poſſibly it may here be aſked what St *Paul* means by paying ſo great compliment to the ſacrifice of *Chriſt's death* as he doth, and by giving it ſo great a preference to the ſacrifices which were appointed by the law? if it *did not* literally take away ſin, or if St *Paul* did not underſtand that to be the caſe. To which it may be anſwered that whatever the (*) Apoſtle intended thereby it is evident he could not intend to repreſent the blood of Chriſt as taking away ſin in a *literal* ſenſe, that being an *impoſſibility in nature* by his own acknowledgment, as in the caſe of the blood of bulls and goats; and therefore he muſt mean that the blood of Chriſt takes away ſin, not in a literal, but in a *moral* or *figurative* ſenſe, as it affords a *proper argument* to work upon ſinners to repent and amend their ways, and thereby to render themſelves the proper objects of God's mercy. Beſides, the Apoſtle not only aſcribes to the blood of Chriſt the *taking away ſin*; but alſo the *reforming the ſinner*, or the purging the conſcience from dead works to ſerve the

(*) See my Diſcourſe entitled the Equity and Reaſonableneſs of the Divine Conduct in pardoning ſinners upon their repentance exemplified. Or a Diſcourſe on the parable of the Prodigal Son.

living God. Thus *Heb.* ix. 14. *How much more ſhall the blood of Chriſt, which through the eternal ſpirit offered himſelf without ſpot to God, purge your conſciences from dead works to ſerve the living God.* Here we ſee the Apoſtle conſiders the blood of Chriſt as reforming the minds and lives of men, by purging their *conſciences* from dead works to ſerve the living God; whereas this is *impoſſible* when taken in a *literal ſenſe*, and therefore St *Paul* muſt be underſtood in a moral or figurative ſenſe, as the ſhedding the blood of Chriſt affords a proper *argument* to work upon men to repent and amend their ways, and ſo to *purge their conſciences from dead works to ſerve the living God.* This is what a man of the Apoſtle's *attention* and *diſcernment* could not but know; and therefore, when he aſcribes purging the conſcience from dead works to the blood of Chriſt, it muſt be a *figure* of ſpeech, and in common juſtice it ought ſo to be underſtood, if we will allow St *Paul* to be a man of *common ſenſe.* And as the blood of Chriſt, by a *figure* of ſpeech, may be ſaid to *purge* the *conſciences* of men from dead works: ſo in the *ſame ſenſe*, and by the *ſame figure* of ſpeech, it may be ſaid to *take away ſin*, as it affords a proper *ſubject* for ſinners to reflect ſeriouſly upon, and

thereby to lead them to repentance and reformation, by which they become the proper objects of God's mercy. And, as it is in this ſenſe, and in this ſenſe only, that the blood of Chriſt can be ſaid to take away ſin, or to purge the conſcience from dead works to ſerve the living God: ſo the Apoſtle could not intend to repreſent the blood of Chriſt as taking away ſin in a literal, but only in a moral or figurative ſenſe, as I obſerved above.

I am likewiſe ſenſible it is pretended, that God could not pardon ſin, till *ſatisfaction* was made to his *juſtice* for tranſgreſſions; and that Chriſt by his *death* made *ſuch ſatisfaction*; and conſequently, that his meritorious ſufferings, were the *ground* or *reaſon* of God's ſhewing mercy to ſinners. Upon which I obſerve, that the ſufferings of the *innocent*, could not poſſibly be a *ſatisfaction* to *juſtice* for the faults of the *guilty*; becauſe, as far as juſtice comes into the caſe it requires, that in the *ſubject* in which the *fault* is, in *that ſame ſubject* the *puniſhment* ſhould be alſo; and the contrary to this is manifeſtly *unjuſt*. So that, if God had *puniſhed* the *innocent* for the *faults* of the *guilty*, and had let the *guilty go free*, this would have been ſo far from ſetting the matter right in point of juſtice and equity,

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that it would have been quite the reverſe, as it is doing or acting unjuſtly by both parties; *viz.* by puniſhing where puniſhment was not due, and by forbearing to puniſh where it was due, which ſurely cannot be doing or ſatisfying juſtice, but the contrary, as I have elſewhere (*) more fully ſhewn. However, this was not the caſe, becauſe Chriſt did not fall a *ſacrifice* to the *reſentment* and *juſtice of God*, but only to the unprovoked wrath and malice of the *wicked Jews* and *Romans*. And therefore, though what is here urged, (ſuppoſing it were well grounded, *viz.* that God could not pardon ſin, till ſatisfaction had been made to his juſtice for tranſgreſſors,) may afford a ſtrong argument for a *popiſh purgatory* (but not for the *profitable trade* founded upon it); yet it will by no means ſerve the preſent purpoſe.

I am alſo ſenſible, it is pretended, that God could not, conſiſtent with the *ends* of *government*, pardon ſinners, without *ſhewing* his *diſlike of ſin*, and that God's diſlike of ſin, was ſhewed by the *ſufferings* and *death* of Chriſt; and conſequently, his ſufferings were the *ground* or *reaſon* of God's

(*) See my Diſcourſe concerning Reaſon with regard to Religion and Divine Revelation.

ſhewing mercy to ſinners. Upon which I obſerve, that if God had ſingled out ſome one or more of the *vileſt* of our ſpecies, and had laid ſome *heavy afflictions* upon them, and had done it in ſuch a way as that it appeared plainly to all to be *his hand*, and that it was laid upon them as a *puniſhment* for their *ſins*; then, there would have been ſome pretence for this argument, becauſe then, it would have appeared that they were puniſhed *by God* on the account of their *ſins*, and conſequently, they would have been ſtanding monuments of *God's diſlike of ſin*. But when the moſt innocent and virtuous of all our ſpecies was ſingled out to bear the moſt heavy afflictions, and when thoſe afflictions were laid upon him, not by the hand of God, but by the wicked *Jews* and *Romans*, and that too, not for his having done evil, but *good*, which is the preſent caſe; this ſurely could not poſſibly ſhew God's diſlike of ſin. And I think I may ſay, that if there be ſuch a thing as perſiſting *obſtinately* in error, it muſt be ſo in the preſent caſe; becauſe I think there is not any thing which has the face of an argument that can be offered in its favour. Again

Secondly,

Secondly, another way in which the goſpel has been perverted and rendered unſucceſsful, has been the doctrine of mens being rendered acceptable to God by a *right belief*, or a ſound and orthodox faith; this doctrine naturally tends to *weaken* or *take off* the perſwaſive influence of thoſe propoſitions which contain the true goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt. For, if perſons are prevailed upon to believe that men are rendered acceptable to God, and that ſinners are recommended to the divine mercy, not on the account of their being in themſelves the ſuitable and proper objects of either, but only on the account of their *judgment* being brought to a *particular ſtandard*, and there *aſſenting* to a ſet of *ſpeculative propoſitions*; then the conſequence is, that perſons ſo perſwaded cannot think themſelves under a *neceſſity* of becoming *perſonally valuable* in themſelves, by a right behaviour, and by repentance and reformation of their evil ways, becauſe if the *former* render men pleaſing to God, the latter is not neceſſary to that end. And this has been too much, and too often the caſe among Chriſtians; men have relied upon the *ſoundneſs* of their *faith*, as the ground of their acceptance with God, however vicious and wicked their affections and actions have been. So that in this view of

Chriſtianity, the great and main point for men to be concerned about, is not what they *do*, but what they *believe*, and accordingly the moſt *vicious actions* are eaſily *overlooked*, by perſons of this principle; whiles an *error*, or even the *ſuſpicion* of an error in points of *faith*, expoſes a man to the *rage* and *madneſs* of ſuch people. And, tho' a ſerious and well-grounded perſwaſion of the truths of the goſpel, naturally tends to reform the vices, and rightly to direct and govern the affections and actions of men, and therefore faith or ſuch a perſwaſion is ſpoken very highly of in the writings of the New Teſtament: yet when faith conſiſts only in the perſwaſion or aſſent of the mind to certain propoſitions, (let thoſe propoſitions be what they will,) and does not produce the forementioned *effect* upon the minds and lives of men, then and in that caſe, faith is ſo far from being a *benefit* to them, that on the contrary it too often proves a *ſnare*, as it leads men into a groundleſs perſwaſion of their being intereſted in God's favour, whilſt they are the unſuitable and improper objects of it. Thus the forementioned doctrine naturally tends to pervert the goſpel of Chriſt, by weakening and taking from it that perſwaſive influence, which otherwiſe

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it might have upon mens minds and lives. And thus my reader will farther ſee how it comes to paſs, that where the goſpel has been received, it has not generally had its proper effect. And,

Here I beg my reader to obſerve, what a wide difference there is betwixt the *ſayings* and *declarations* of *Chriſt*, and the *ſayings* and *declarations* of ſome of thoſe men who call themſelves after his name, touching this matter. Our Lord ſaith, *if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments*, (and keeping the commandments, according to his own explanation, is to love the Lord our God with all our heart ſoul mind and ſtrength, and our neighbour as our ſelves); *this do and thou ſhalt live.* Theſe are the words and declarations of *Chriſt*, whereas ſome of thoſe who call themſelves his followers, ſay, and declare otherways. They ſay, *Whoſoever will be ſaved, before all things it is neceſſary that he hold the catholick faith, which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he ſhall periſh everlaſtingly. And the catholick faith is this, that we worſhip one God in trinity, and trinity in unity; neither confounding the perſons, nor dividing the ſubſtance*, and ſo on, as in that *creed*, commonly called the creed of St *Athanaſius*. Here I obſerve, that the way

way to heaven which Chriſt pointed out to men, is to *love God* and *their neighbour*, *this do* (ſaith he) *and thou ſhalt live:* whereas, the way to life which ſome Chriſtians have pointed out, is thro' a *dark maze* of ſpeculative and myſterious propoſitions; and the holding or aſſenting to thoſe, is made the *ground* of God's favour. But this I think is the *higheſt pitch* of *Antichriſtianiſm*, as it is *oppoſing Chriſt* in the moſt *material* point of all, and tends to *diſappoint* and *fruſtrate* the very end and purpoſe of his coming, which was to be a ſafe guide to life eternal; by pointing out to men, the true way that leads thither. For, if men are taught to believe, that the great and main thing they are to be concerned about, with reſpect to the ſaving of their ſouls, is not the rightly directing and governing their *affections* and *actions*, but the *captivating* their *underſtandings* to a ſet of myſterious propoſitions, which is the preſent caſe, this naturally tends to make them *negligent* and *regardleſs* of what Chriſt has declared to be the conditions of God's favour, and the true way to life eternal, and thereby the great end and purpoſe of his coming is likely to be fruſtrated.

Beſides, the propoſitions here referred to are ſome of them *unintelligible*, or at leaſt are *exceeding difficult* to be underſtood, others

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are *contradictory*, and many of them are what the *ſalvation* of men is not the leaſt concerned with. Thus the creed begins. *And the catholick faith is this, that we worſhip one God in trinity, and trinity in unity; neither confounding the perſons, nor dividing the ſubſtance.* This propoſition I think is *unintelligible*, or at leaſt *exceeding difficult* to be underſtood; becauſe it is hard to conceive what ideas are intended to be conveyed by thoſe words. And, that ſome of thoſe propoſitions are *contradictory* to each other, is moſt evident. For, if there be one perſon of the *father*, another of the *ſon*, and another of the *holy ghoſt*, and if the father the ſon and the holy ghoſt be *each* and *every of them eternal*, as this creed maintaineth; then, there are in the moſt ſtrict and proper ſenſe *three eternals*; that is, there are *three eternal perſons*, or *three perſons* who are each and every one of them *eternal*: and yet, in direct contradiction, the ſame creed affirmeth, that *there are not three eternals, but one eternal.* And many of the propoſitions here referred to, are ſuch, with which the *ſalvation* of men is not concerned. For, what has a trinity in unity, or unity in trinity; or three eternals, and but one eternal; or three incomprehenſibles, and but one incomprehenſible; or three uncreated,

or the *King*. In like manner, when any of our clergy read that creed to their people, in which the following declarations are contained, *viz. Whoſoever will be ſaved, before all things it is neceſſary that he hold the catholick faith, which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he ſhall periſh everlaſtingly.* Again. *He therefore that will be ſaved, muſt thus think of the trinity. Furthermore it is neceſſary to everlaſting ſalvation, that he believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* Again. *This is the catholick faith, which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be ſaved.* I ſay, that as in theſe declarations, there is pointed out to men *another way* to life eternal than what *Chriſt* hath pointed out unto them: ſo in common *juſtice*, the reader ought alſo to repeat the words and declarations of *Chriſt* touching this matter, and to remind the people that *theſe*, and *only theſe* are the words of Chriſt, and that the *other* are the words of *men* who call themſelves his followers; and then, leave it to the people's choice, which of theſe they will take for their *guide*, in ſo important an affair. Again.

Thirdly, there have been other doctrines advanced and entertained among Chriſtians, which tend to ſubvert the goſpel of Chriſt

another way, *viz.* ſuch as that God has from his ſovereign pleaſure, and by an irreverſible decree *fixed* the *final* condition of every man, conſidered abſtractedly from, and independent of a man's good or bad behaviour, which might be the ground or reaſon of ſuch determination. This doctrine, and doctrines near of kin to it, have prevailed among Chriſtians, by which the perſwaſive influence of the goſpel has been *weakened* and *deſtroyed.* For, as the doctrine of the goſpel is founded upon this ſuppoſition, *viz.* that mens *future ſafety* or *miſcarriage* is left to every one's *choice*, as it depends upon their preſent behaviour, and that it is in every man's *power* to behave *well*, or *ill:* ſo if men can bring themſelves to think that this is *not the caſe*, and that their *future ſtate* is fixed by an *unalterable decree*, grounded merely on *ſovereign pleaſure*, then all care and regard for themſelves muſt of courſe be ſet aſide; becauſe it is vain and uſeleſs; and conſequently, the doctrines of the goſpel can have no perſwaſive influence upon their minds and lives. And from hence my reader will alſo further ſee how it comes to paſs, that where the goſpel has been received and profeſſed, it has not generally had its proper effect. Again.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, there have been other doctrines advanced among Chriſtians, which tend to ſubvert the goſpel in a way different from the former, *viz.* ſuch, as that our ſpecies are brought under a kind of *fatality*, which puts it out of their power to *do good*, and *neceſſarily* or at leaſt *unavoidably* (which I think comes to the ſame) determines them to *do evil*. And, that this unhappy ſtate of mankind, which ſubjects them to the diſpleaſure of God, and to the miſeries of another world, is owing to the miſcarriage of our *firſt parents*; or to the operation of ſome *foreign agent* acting upon us; tho' it is ſometimes aſcribed to one of theſe cauſes, ſometimes to the other, and ſometimes to both. This, and ſuch like doctrines have, and do ſtill prevail among Chriſtians, by which the perſwaſive influence of the goſpel has been loſt upon them. For, if men can be prevailed upon to think that their actions are not in their *own power*, and that whatever they do is *unavoidable*; then, as they cannot juſtly blame themſelves for any thing they do, how vile ſoever their behaviour may be: ſo they have no ground or reaſon to hearken or attend to any advice or counſel which may be offered to them. And, as the doctrine of the goſpel does not operate upon men by way of charm, but

only by moral ſwaſion, and, as the aforeſaid doctrine renders all perſwaſion *uſeleſs*: ſo of courſe it renders the goſpel of Chriſt a *uſeleſs* thing, as it takes away that perſwaſive influence, which otherwiſe it might have upon the minds and lives of men. And from hence my reader may likewiſe farther ſee how it comes to paſs, that where the goſpel has been received, it has not generally had its proper effect. Again.

Fifthly, there have likewiſe other opinions prevailed among Chriſtians, which tho' they do not quite deſtroy, yet they very much tend to weaken the perſwaſive influence of the goſpel, by engaging mens *greateſt attention to*, and *regard* for other things, which are put in competition with it, and preferred before it. Thus, the ſetting too great a value upon, and paying too great a regard to *rites* and *ceremonies* and *poſitive inſtitutions*, by giving them the preference to *moral duties*, is highly injurious to the goſpel of Chriſt. For, if men are once perſwaded that a conſtant attendance on, and a warm zeal for ceremonies and poſitive inſtitutions, (which is conſiſtent with the practice of vice) is more valuable in itſelf, and more acceptable to God, than a conformity of mind and life to that rule of action which is founded in the reaſon of things, then of

courſe their obligation to, and regard for the latter, becomes ſo much the *weaker*; and conſequently, the perſwaſive influence of the goſpel, is in proportion taken off hereby.

Alas! the injury which has been, and is ſtill done to the goſpel, or rather to the ſouls of men by this means, is inexpreſſible. This is moſt viſible in *Papiſh* countries, where mens attendance on, zeal for, and truſt in theſe is carried to its utmoſt height; where this principle has introduced a multitude of *ſuperſtitions*, expreſſed by waſhings, faſtings, bowings, proſtrations, croſſings, and the like; and where there are large bodies or religious orders of men who live all their days lazily and idlely upon the labours of others, without bearing the leaſt ſhare of the common burthen, or contributing the leaſt mite to the common good, having nothing perſonally valuable in themſelves to recommend them, but many of them much the contrary, and yet think themſelves ſecure of God's favour, on the merit of a *hair ſhirt*, a *hemp girdle*, or whatever is the *diſtinguiſhing character* of their order, and ſpending ſome of their time in meditation and devotion. And tho' the unworthy falſe principle I have now under conſideration hath moſt groſsly appeared in *Popiſh* countries; yet it has not failed to act its part

among *Proteſtants*; there being abundance among them who have little elſe to recommend them but their attendance on, and zeal for ceremonies, and poſitive inſtitutions, and their making an *outcry* for orthodoxy and the church. But what is a matter of concern at preſent is that this *Popiſh* doctrine, as it may well be called, becauſe it ſerves to anſwer *Popiſh* purpoſes, ſhould now be contended for among us; and that ſome of our *preachers* of Chriſt and his goſpel, ſhould become *publick advocates* in its defence; this is a melancholy conſideration. And, from what I have obſerved, my reader will alſo farther ſee how it comes to paſs, that the goſpel where it has been embraced and profeſſed, has not generally had its proper effect. Again.

Sixthly, another thing which has been highly injurious to the goſpel of Chriſt, was that great *liberality* which took place in the early times of Chriſtianity, by which men gave their goods both movable and immovable to the *church*, that is, to Chriſtian ſocieties. And tho', this at firſt was kindly intended to anſwer the purpoſes of Chriſtian aſſociation; yet afterwards it was *miſapplied*, to the *prejudice* of the goſpel. For, wherever *property* takes place, *power* will attend it in proportion; and the intro-

ducing of property and power into Chriſtian ſocieties, laid a foundation for *parties* and *factions* among Chriſtians, by which mens attention and regard was taken off from the doctrines of the goſpel, and applied to other things, which were not ſubſervient to the ſaving, but rather to the deſtroying of mens ſouls. When property and power took place in Chriſtian ſocieties, then, there was ſomething which crafty ſelfiſh and deſigning men thought worth contending for; and accordingly as the event ſhewed, bones of contention were introduced, and diſcord, wrath and tumults, hating and perſecuting one another, and every evil word and work followed upon it; ſo that the doctrine of the goſpel had little or no influence upon their minds or lives.

Beſides, as the main deſign of a *Chriſtian miniſtry*, was to awaken and keep freſh in the minds of the people, ſuch an affecting ſenſe of the *doctrines of the goſpel*, as might diſpoſe and engage them to frame and faſhion their minds and lives according to it: ſo the introducing property and power into Chriſtian ſocieties, in a great meaſure *fruſtrated* that good deſign, by introducing with it a miniſtry among Chriſtians, which in that reſpect, has been, (taking all ages and countries into the caſe) in a great meaſure

ſure *uſeleſs*. When thoſe who firſt took upon them the care of Chriſtian ſocieties, and in conſequence thereof were conſtantly refreſhing the minds of the people with a juſt ſenſe of the doctrines of the goſpel, and in that reſpect, were ſaid to be preachers of it, when thoſe who thus *preached the goſpel, lived of the goſpel*; (that is, on the *bounty* of thoſe to whom they preached) then, thoſe who entered into the miniſtry, (that is, thoſe who undertook to miniſter to, and for a Chriſtian ſociety in matters of religion) did it for no other end, but to be ſubſervient to the goſpel, and the ſaving mens ſouls, and to this was their care and labours in the miniſtry directed, as indeed then, they could not have any great worldly advantage in view. But, when wealth and power were conſidered as the *property* of the *Clergy*, which by degrees came to be the caſe, then, men went into the miniſtry, not to purſue the great end which Chriſt came into the world to proſecute, *viz.* to ſecure to men their future happineſs, but to anſwer the purpoſes of wealth, and power, and grandeur to themſelves, and to the obtaining of theſe, was their care and diligence and their induſtry chiefly directed. So that the true goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt for the moſt part became *neglected* and *diſregarded*, any

farther, than, as it ſerved to grace and countenance mens worldly deſigns. I would not by this be underſtood to mean, that all who entered into the Chriſtian miniſtry, did it with thoſe vicious views beforementioned; but what I intend is, that as this was a natural conſequence of Chriſtian ſocieties being poſſeſſed with wealth and power; ſo it became too generally the caſe. And, when Clergymen came to be *over rewarded* for the ſervice and duty they were appointed to perform, they then, generally became *above* that ſervice they were rewarded for. And indeed, this has been too much the caſe in *civil*, as well as in *religious* affairs; the *great rewards* which have been given to civil governors, have been too apt to ſet ſome of thoſe governors, above the work and duty they were rewarded for. But, let that be as it will, what I obſerve is, that the *over* rewarding a Chriſtian miniſtry, renders it in a great meaſure uſeleſs; as it generally ſets thoſe miniſters above the work and duty they are rewarded for. And,

The *enlarging* the revenues of the church, not only introduced a *uſeleſs*, but alſo a *ſuperfluous Clergy*, or a ſet of Clergymen, who with reſpect to their *offices* in Chriſtian

ſtian ſocieties, have anſwered very little or no good purpoſe to the goſpel of Chriſt, or the ſouls of men, whatever plauſible pretences may have been made in their favour. Theſe ſuperfluous Clergymen, have been dignified and diſtinguiſhed by *pompous titles* and *veſtments*, which have ſerved to introduce a groundleſs *veneration* and *reſpect* to their perſons, whilſt their principal buſineſs has been, to poſſeſs great revenues, to live in pomp and grandeur, aſſuming and exerciſing dominion over their brethren, whom they have endeavoured to keep under the power of ignorance and ſuperſtition, as it has been the ground and foundation of their wealth and ſovereignty; whoſe power has been employed to the very great hurt and damage of Chriſtian people, and has been highly injurious to the goſpel of Chriſt. And tho', this has been moſt notoriouſly the caſe in *Popiſh* countries; yet notwithſtanding the *reformation*, ſome of thoſe ſuperfluous dignified Clergymen maintain their ground amongſt *Proteſtants*, at leaſt with reſpect to their *pomp* and *poſſeſſions*. And,

As the power and wealth of the Clergy *increaſed*; ſo their *thirſt* after more increaſed with it; and this introduced *plurality* of *beneſices*, or one man taking upon him the care and charge of more than one Chriſtian

ſociety, becauſe the profits which aroſe from one, was not ſufficient to gratify his avaritious deſires. Tho' it muſt be remembered, that when the Clergy took care to enlarge their revenues, by introducing plurality of benefices, they took care at the ſame not to *increaſe* their own labours, but to *decreaſe* them, by the introduction of a *ſupernumerary Clergy*. Theſe ſupernumerary Clergymen, were ſuch as had no Chriſtian ſocieties committed to their care, but only ſerved as *journeymen* to do the work for a ſmall ſtipend, whilſt the appointed guardian of the ſocieties ſouls, lived lazily and idlely upon the profits of it. And, this again introduced that moſt unfair practice of *non-reſidence*, which very much prevails at this day. A practice the moſt unreaſonable, as a man not only takes the care and charge of the ſouls of a Chriſtian ſociety upon him, in order to do his beſt towards ſecuring to them their future happineſs; but alſo receives a handſome gratuity on *that account*, and as a reward for that very care and ſervice; and yet notwithſtanding, he puts it off to *another*, to whom he pays a much leſs reward than what he receives himſelf, and takes no farther thought nor care about them, but whether they *ſink* or *ſwim*, be *ſaved* or *damned* he matteretb not. As if the *ſafety*

or *miſcarriage* of mens ſouls in another world, was ſuch a *trifling* affair, as not to deſerve his moſt ſerious regard; or as if what was to be done for the people, was of ſuch little conſequence, that it might be ſhifted off from one to another, and if it be but done, then how, or when, or by whom it is done, it mattereth not. Tho' by the way, it is to be remembered, that neither the *hireling* nor his *principal*, are often more, or longer, or does more for the people, than their *ſtated duty*, and the *law* obliges them; and very often not ſo much. Yea, ſuch is the behaviour of ſome Clergymen towards their people, that they do not come near them from Sunday to Sunday, and then it is only haſtily to read over the church ſervice, with a ſhort leſſon of inſtruction, and when that is done, the horſe ſtands ready at the hatch, and carries him off; and the people are left in the wilderneſs of this world, like *ſheep* without a *ſhepherd*. And tho', this is not always, yet it is too often the caſe, even among us, in a *Proteſtant country*, and in a *reformed church*, a church, which (if ſome of our Clergy do not tell God Almighty *idle tales* in their *prayers*,) is the *beſt*, the *moſt reformed*, the *pureſt*, the *moſt primitive* and *apoſtolical* of any church in the world; and ſurely, it

may

may well be doubted, whether the caſe is better in the *Roman* and *Greek* churches, who have no *juſt* pretence to theſe high characters. So that the Chriſtian miniſtry has not turned to any great account, with reſpect to its being ſubſervient towards the anſwering the true ends and purpoſes of the goſpel of Chriſt, which is what it ought, and what it was intended to be ſubſervient to. What I intend by all this, is to ſhew my reader how it comes to paſs, that where the goſpel has been received and profeſſed, it has not generally had its intended effect; and that it is in part owing to that *uſeleſs* miniſtry which has too generally prevailed in the Chriſtian world.

To this I may add, that the poſſeſſing the Clergy with wealth and power, which was firſt introduced by mens great liberality in giving their goods both moveable and immoveable to the church, this introduced not only a uſeleſs, a ſuperfluous, and a ſupernumerary, but alſo an *injurious* miniſtry, or a miniſtry which were *directly* and *immediately* highly injurious to the goſpel of Chriſt, and to the ſouls of men. I ſhall not here take notice of the numberleſs evils and miſchiefs, and the miſeries which have been brought upon multitudes of our ſpecies by their means, by their wicked, perfidious,

and

and barbarous practices, and by their procurement; for were all theſe to be entered upon record, (allowing me to uſe the ſame figure of ſpeech, which St John has uſed before me,) I ſuppoſe the world it ſelf, would not contain the books which might be written; but this is beſides my preſent purpoſe. What I obſerve is, that the introducing of *wealth* and *power* into Chriſtian ſocieties, introduced with it a miniſtry which were directly and immediately *highly injurious* to the goſpel of Chriſt, and to the ſouls of men. For as the Clergy were ſet upon increaſing their wealth and power at all hazards: ſo they, in order to anſwer thoſe purpoſes, have introduced *ſuch doctrines*, and ſuch a multitude of *ſuperſtitious practices*, and aſſumed to themſelves *ſuch power*, as took away the perſwaſive influence of the goſpel, and rendered it of none effect. Thus, the Clergy claimed a *diſpenſing power*, or a power to *diſpenſe* with mens *duty*; and an *indulging power*, or a power to *indulge* men in their *vices*; and a *pardoning power*, or a power to *pardon* and *forgive* mens ſins. So that by this means, the Clergy not only robbed the people of their *temporals* to enrich themſelves, but alſo they ſadly *miſled* them with regard to things *ſpiritual*, to the manifeſt *injury* of the goſpel, and to the

the apparent *hazard* of their ſouls. And as the Clergy carried the *keys* of *heaven* at their girdles: ſo this gave them an *opportunity* and a *pretence* when they let any *perſon* in, or rather *pretended* ſo to do, for receiving a *handſome preſent* for the favour, which the people were ready to make them. For, if a man will give *ſkin upon ſkin*, or *ſkin after ſkin*, and *all that he hath to ſave his life*; then, what will he not give to *ſave his ſoul*, when he apprehends it in danger. And, as the *ſafety* of mens ſouls, was ſuppoſed to be thus in the *hands* of the *Clergy*: ſo of courſe the great care and concern of the people was, not ſo much to render themſelves acceptable to God, by a right behaviour, and by repentance and reformation of their evil ways, but to ſecure to themſelves an intereſt in their *prieſts*, which might be done with an *indulgence* of their *vicious inclinations*; and thus, the perſwaſive influence of the goſpel was loſt upon them.

To which I may farther add, that the *wicked lives* of *many* of the Clergy, have been highly injurious to the goſpel of Chriſt, and to the ſouls of men. For, as *example* generally influences more *ſtrongly* than precept, and as *bad* examples are apt to work more ſtrongly and perſwaſively than good ones;

ones: ſo the bad examples of Clergymen are *more* miſchievous and hurtful than any others. Clergymen are ſuppoſed to be well acquainted with their duty, and to have an awakened ſenſe of it; and therefore, the people are too apt to think they may *follow* their example with *ſafety*. So that, when Clergymen go into any *wicked* practices, the people *follow them*, and think they may *a little exceed* them, without any apprehenſion of *danger* to themſelves. And thus, the perſwaſive influence of the goſpel, is weakened and deſtroyed.

So that, if it be conſidered, what a *bone* of *contention* was introduced among Chriſtians, by the introduction of *wealth* and *power* into Chriſtian ſocieties, and what *ſtrife* and *debate*, *quarrels* and *tumults* have followed upon it; and likewiſe, that it introduced among Chriſtians many *uſeleſs*, and *ſuperfluous*, and *ſupernumerary*, and above all many *injurious* Clergymen, or men who in a variety of ways have *ſubverted* the *true goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt*, by weakening and taking off its perſwaſive influence, and rendering it of none effect. I ſay, when all this is conſidered, then, it will not appear ſtrange, and my reader will ſee how it comes to paſs, that with reſpect to thoſe who have received and profeſſed the goſpel,

it has not generally had its proper effect and influence upon their minds and lives. Again.

Seventhly, the making of *infant* Chriſtians, has been very injurious to the goſpel of Chriſt. For, as by this means Chriſtianity is become in a manner *hereditary*, deſcending from *parents* to their *children*: ſo for a man to be *once* a Chriſtian, is to be *always* a Chriſtian, without his taking any farther thought or care about it. Perſons in the preſent caſe, are made Chriſtians, whilſt they are under an incapacity of knowing what Chriſtianity is; and, conſequently, are ſuch *independent* of their *choice*. And as their own judgment or practice was not the *ground* or *reaſon* of their being Chriſtians: ſo too too many have been apt to conclude that their *after conduct* makes no alteration in the caſe. And accordingly, multitudes of perſons have claimed the character of *Chriſtians*, and as ſuch preſume that they are *intereſted* in the *promiſes* of the goſpel, when they have had no other pretence to theſe, but their being *made Chriſtians* by baptiſm in their childhood. And as the practice of making infant Chriſtians has generally prevailed over the Chriſtian world, there having been but few Chriſtians comparatively for many ages

who

who have *proteſted* againſt it: ſo the injury which has been done to the goſpel by this means has been ſo much the greater. And,

As the practice of making infant Chriſtians has taken place; ſo the inſtitutions of Chriſt have been *proſtituted* to grace and countenance it. And thus infants have been waſhed with, or plunged under water, to repreſent their *diſcipleſhip* to Chriſt; that is, their belief in, and ſubmiſſion to his goſpel; when they were not capable of knowing any thing of either. And thus likewiſe they have been made to *partake* of that inſtitution by which the memory of Chriſt's life and death was intended to be preſerved and kept freſh in the minds of his people; when they were incapable of knowing that there ever was ſuch a perſon as Chriſt in the world. This I call a *proſtitution* of the inſtitutions of Chriſt, becauſe in truth it is no leſs. The inſtitutions of Chriſt were intended to be ſubſervient to the goſpel, by awakening ſuitable reflections in thoſe that uſe them, and thereby producing in them ſuitable and proper affections and actions; and therefore to apply theſe to ſubjects *incapable* of ſuch reflections, is to apply them in ſuch a way as that the end of thoſe inſtitutions cannot poſſibly be anſwered upon them;

them; and this ſurely is a proſtitution of the inſtitutions of Chriſt. And, as the perſwaſive influence of the goſpel has been very much *weakened* thereby; ſo from hence my reader will likewiſe ſee how it comes to paſs, that where the goſpel has been received and profeſſed, it has not generally had its proper effect. Again

Eighthly, that which has been *moſt of all injurious* to the goſpel of Chriſt, was the *blending* together *Chriſtian* and *civil* ſocieties and making them the ſame thing. By this unnatural coalition, all the other ways by which the goſpel has been perverted, have been as it were *ratifyed* and *confirmed*. By this, the moſt abſurd doctrines, and the moſt groſs ſuperſtitions have been *eſtabliſhed* and *perpetuated* through many generations, without any hope or proſpect of a reformation. By this, the profeſſion of Chriſtianity has been made principally ſubſervient, not to the *ſaving* of mens ſouls in another world, but to anſwer the purpoſes of *worldly* policy in this. By this, the moſt *bloody* and *cruel perſecutions* have been introduced among and practiſed by Chriſtians, which has brought great *ſcandal* upon Chriſtianity, and is a reproach even to the Chriſtian *name*. By this, Chriſtian ſocieties have been conſtituted of perſons

of

of all *characters*, as well the moſt openly vicious, profane and profligate, as the more ſober and virtuous; and hereby, Chriſtian ſocieties have been ſo far from recommending Chriſtianity to a general acceptance, that on the contrary, the *groſs prevarications*, and other abominable practices of Chriſtians have rendered it *odious* and *contemptible* to the reſt of mankind. And by this, a miniſtry has been *eſtabliſhed* and *impoſed* upon Chriſtian ſocieties, and whether thoſe miniſters have preached the *true goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt*, or whether they have preached ſuch doctrines as tend to *ſubvert it*, whether they have proſecuted the *good* and *well being* of the reſpective ſocieties committed to their care, or whether they have been *plagues* and *peſts* to them, whether in their private characters they have been an *ornament* or a *ſcandal* to the Chriſtian religion, I ſay, let the caſe have been how it would in theſe and many other reſpects, the people have been obliged to *attend them*, and ſit down under their miniſtry, it not being in their power to redreſs themſelves, except it were by a *ſeparation* from the eſtabliſhed religion, and that has been *too often* attended with the *moſt dreadful conſequences to them*; conſequences ſo dreadful, as has rendered *Chriſtianity*, or rather what has been called by that *name*,

the moſt *terrible thing* that ever took place in the world. And as the *blending* together *civil* and *Chriſtian* ſocieties, by making them the ſame thing, (and which ought ever to have been kept diſtinct and ſeparate,) has been highly injurious to the *goſpel* of *Chriſt*, and as it has given Chriſtianity ſuch a *deadly wound*, as is not likely to be healed: ſo this will ſhew my reader how it comes to paſs, that where the goſpel has been received and profeſſed, it has not generally had its proper effect and influence upon the minds and lives of men. Again

Laſtly I obſerve, that as man is a *free being*: ſo it muſt be in his *power*, and be left to his *choice* whether he will behave well, or ill, notwithſtanding the great tendency of the goſpel to diſpoſe and engage him to do what is right. And ſuppoſing when a man attends to what is offered in the goſpel; he cannot avoid being *convinced* of the *truth* and *reaſonableneſs* of it: yet ſtill he has it in his *power*, and it is left to his *choice* whether the goſpel ſhall have its proper effect upon his mind and life, or not. And as experience ſhews, what *influence* appetite and paſſion, bad example, vicious ſelf love, and the like has upon the actions of many men, by which they are led to do that which upon mature conſideration their judgments

ments would condemn: So this, together with what I have obſerved above, will be ſufficient to ſhew my reader how it comes to paſs, that the goſpel of Chriſt, tho' excellently ſuited to reform the world, and rightly to direct and govern the affections and actions of men; yet it has not generally had that effect upon thoſe who have received and profeſſed it.

SECT. XVII.

THUS I have gone through what I propoſed, and have ſhewn what was the *great end*, and the *profeſſed deſign* of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt's coming into the world, and of what he did, and ſuffered, in it, from it and for it. I have likewiſe ſhewn what were the *means* Chriſt made uſe of in order to obtain the end propoſed; and that thoſe means are *excellently ſuited* to anſwer that purpoſe. I have alſo ſhewn what *were*, and *are* ſome of the *principal ways* by which that end has been diſappointed. And as in the doing of this, I have had occaſion to take notice of a variety of points: ſo I could but touch upon many of them, becauſe otherways I muſt have run out this tract to a much greater length, which I choſe to avoid.

To

To conclude the whole, I beg leave to recommend to my reader the ſerious conſideration of a *future judgment* and *retribution*, and if he is perſwaded there will be ſuch a judgment, as I hope he is; that then, he would not barely entertain it as a *ſpeculation* which in point of argument he is capable of defending, but that he would pay ſuch a *ſerious regard* to it, as to make it a *principle* of *action* to himſelf; that is, that he would ſo regard it, as to *live ſuitable* to ſuch a perſwaſion, and as one that muſt give an account of himſelf to God. And that my reader may have a *well-grounded* perſwaſion of the forementioned truth, I will lay before him the principles upon which the *certainty* of a future judgment is founded. *viz. Firſt*, that there is a Deity or governing mind, who as he made all things excluſive of himſelf: ſo he inſpects or takes cognizance of the actions of his creatures. *Secondly*, that there is a natural and an eſſential difference in things, and that one thing or action is preferable to another in nature. *Thirdly*, the eſſential difference in things and the preferableneſs of one thing or action to another in nature, is the *ground* of the divine conduct, and the *reaſon* why God chuſes to act one way rather than another. *Fourthly*, as God is

preſent to, and in, and with all things, and as he has no wrong or vitiated affections from within, nor any inticing temptations from without, to miſlead him, either in point of judgment or practice: ſo from hence it becomes certain, that he *cannot err* in point of judgment, and that he *will not* in point of practice; that is, he cannot poſſibly form a wrong judgment of things in any caſe, and he will always chuſe to act right, or agreeably to that reaſon of action which reſults from the eſſential difference, and the preferableneſs of one thing to another in nature. Theſe I ſay, are the *principles* upon which the *certainty* (*) of a future judgment is founded.

I ſhall not here take upon me to prove the ſeveral principles before laid down, but only ſhew my reader how the *certainty* of a future judgment does *naturally reſult* from them. Man is a creature who is qualified to *diſcern* the eſſential difference, and the preferableneſs of one thing or action to another in nature, tho' in complex caſes he is liable to miſtake. He is likewiſe a *free* being, who has power put into his hand, tho' ſome more, ſome leſs, which renders him

(*) By certainty is not meant mathematical, but moral certainty, which is all the certainty that the nature of the thing will admit in the preſent caſe.

him capable of contributing to the *good* or *hurt*, to the happineſs or miſery of many of his fellow creatures, of being a *bleſſing* or a *curſe*, a *benefactor* or a *plague* to the intelligent world. And as man is *ſuch* a being, who has it thus in his power, and it is left to his choice, whether he will contribute to the general end of being, which is a general happineſs, or whether he will perverſely, and out of an exceſſive and unreaſonable regard to himſelf contribute to the contrary, of which every man will be more or leſs one or the other: ſo when he has *thus* acted his part in life, and is *gone off* the ſtage of action, then, it is highly *fit* and *reaſonable*, it is perfectly *juſt* and *equal*, that the maker, director, and governour of the univerſe, ſhould call him to an account for his behaviour, and ſhould ſhew his *favour* or his *diſpleaſure* to him, according as the *merit* or *demerit* of his actions ſhall render him worthy of either. And as God will always act *agreeably* to that reaſon of action, which reſults from the eſſential difference, and the preferableneſs of one thing or action to another in nature; and as there is an *evident reaſon* for a future judgment, reſulting from that difference: ſo from hence it will unavoidably follow, that God will moſt certainly judge

the world. And thus my reader may ſee, that the certainty of a future judgment and retribution is deduced, plainly, and evidently, from the forementioned principles. Theſe I think are the *grounds*, and the *only* grounds, upon which the certainty of a future judgment is founded. I know that ſome men roundly aſſert (and ſeem to do it by way of *inſult* upon the *Deiſts*), that men can have no certainty of a future judgment, any otherway than from *revelation*: but I beg thoſe gentlemen carefully to examine the principles before laid down, and then, ſhew the world wherein the *defect* of my reaſoning lies. And

As it is pretended men can have no certainty of a future judgment but from *revelation*; I therefore, crave leave to aſk, *what* certainty revelation affords in the preſent caſe? And the anſwer I preſume will be, that God has *declared* therein that he will judge the world. And this leads me to enquire, *what* certainty men have, that God will act *agreeably* to ſuch a declaration? And here the common, and indeed the only anſwer is, that God is a God of *truth* who *cannot*, that is to ſay, who *will not lie* nor *deceive*. But then, the queſtion will return, *what* certainty have we that God will not lie nor deceive? And here I think,

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the anſwer will be, either, that lying and deceiving is *wrong* and *unfit* in the *general*, or elſe that it is ſo in the *preſent caſe*, and that *this* affords a proper ground of certainty, either, that God will not lie nor deceive in *any caſe*, or elſe that he will not do it at leaſt in the *caſe before us*; and from *hence* it will follow, that God will moſt certainly judge the world, ſeeing he has *declared* that he will do it. Now, whether we conſider lying and deceiving as wrong and unfit in the general, or whether it be ſo only in the preſent caſe, it comes to the ſame with reſpect to this argument: becauſe in both caſes it is ſuppoſed that there is an eſſential *difference* in things, and that one thing or action is *preferable* to another in nature, and likewiſe that ſuch difference is the *ground* or *reaſon* why God chuſes to act one way rather than another; why he chuſes to reveal the *truth* rather than a *lie*; either in the general, or in any particular caſe; why he chuſes to *keep* his promiſe rather than *break* it. And as this is the *only ground* of certainty with reſpect to the *divine veracity*, namely, we are ſure that God will not lie nor deceive, becauſe lying and deceiving is *wrong* and *unfit*, either in the *general*, or in any *particular* caſe referred to: ſo this affords a *like ground*

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of certainty, that *God* will *judge* the world, whether he has declared that he will do it, or not, becauſe it is *right* and *fit* that he ſhould.

But farther, the *certainty* which *revelation* affords in the preſent caſe, does not barely reſult from the divine *declaration*, but from the *ground* or *reaſon* of that declaration, *viz.* the *rightneſs* and *fitneſs* of the thing declared. For, were we to admit what is not to be admitted, *viz.* that there is no reaſon reſulting from the nature of things for a future judgment; then I ſay, we could not be certain that there ever would be ſuch a thing, even tho' God had declared that he would judge the world; becauſe if he may be ſuppoſed to act *without*, or *againſt reaſon* in *one* inſtance (which would be the *preſent caſe)*, then he may do it in a *thouſand* inſtances; if he, without, or againſt reaſon declared that he would *judge* the world, then he might without, or againſt reaſon *refuſe to abide* by ſuch a declaration; and conſequently, the divine declaration upon the preſent ſuppoſition, would not afford ſuch a ground of credit, as ought *abſolutely* to be relied upon; and therefore, certainty could not poſſibly reſult from it. So that, if the certainty of a future judgment, could not be

diſcovered by *reaſon*; then much leſs could it be done by a *divine revelation*. And from what I have obſerved, I think, it plainly appears, that revelation is ſo far from carrying the evidence for a future judgment *higher* than reaſon, that it rather *borrows* or *derives* its *own ſtrength* from it. Indeed, when a *ſecond* evidence is added to a *firſt*, in witneſſing to the ſame truth, this may be ſaid to carry the evidence for that truth *higher* or *farther*, than when either of thoſe evidences ſtood ſingle and alone, and in this ſenſe, revelation may be ſaid to carry the evidence for a future judgment *higher* or *farther* than reaſon, as the divine teſtimony, is *added* to the evidence ariſing from reaſon, and both join iſſue in witneſſing to the ſame truth.

The reaſon why I inſiſt on this is, becauſe if what ſome men complain of be true, *viz.* that *Deiſm* and *infidelity prevail*; then, there is an apparent *neceſſity* for it. The evidence ariſing from divine revelation, will be of *little* or *no weight* with perſons who *doubt* or *diſbelieve* it; and therefore, thoſe perſons muſt be dealt with ſome other way. They muſt be ſhewn by arguments drawn from reaſon and experience, that it is their *wiſdom*, their *duty*, and their *intereſt*, both with reſpect to this world, and that to come,

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to live *good* and *virtuous* lives. They muſt be made ſenſible, that they are *accountable* creatures, who are *anſwerable* for their preſent behaviour to God, whether there be any ſuch thing as a divine revelation, or not. This I ſay muſt be done, if we would do the perſons here referred to any ſervice, this being what the ſuppoſed *preſent* circumſtances of things require; and this is what one would think, every *good* man, who has a tender regard for the preſent and future well-being of mankind, would *chuſe* to do. But inſtead of this, they are frequently told, that they can have no certainty of a future judgment and retribution but from *revelation*, which is the ſame as to ſay, that they can have *no certainty at all.* And as to the perſons here referred to, who are ſuppoſed to diſbelieve the divinity of the Chriſtian revelation, it is the ſame as to tell them, that they may give as *great a looſe* to their appetites and paſſions as they pleaſe, becauſe it cannot be made evident *to them*, that they are accountable for their actions. This is a ſad ſtate of the caſe, and yet it is what ſome of our *Chriſtian writers*, and *Chriſtianity defenders* inſiſt on. And not only this, but other principles are advanced, which are ſubverſive of religion and virtue, *viz.* that *ſelf-intereſt* is the ground and foun-

dation of all obligation; that there is *no real difference* in things, when conſidered abſtractedly from, and independent of any divine determination concerning them; and the like. So that there is no principle in nature to reaſon from, nor any foundation for argument, with reſpect to religion, and divine revelation. And thus *virtue* and *religion*, are in danger of being plucked up by the roots.

A SHORT

A SHORT

DISSERTATION

ON

PROVIDENCE.

Wherein the Doctrine of a particular Providence is particularly conſidered.

By *THOMAS CHUBB.*

A SHORT DISSERTATION ON *PROVIDENCE.*

PROVIDENCE is uſually diſtinguiſhed into general and particular.

By a general providence I underſtand *firſt*, that God, at the creation, put the natural world under the direction of certain Laws; (*) and that ever ſince he has cauſed it to be paſſively ſubject to thoſe laws, by which means he has made

(*) The word Law as here applied to the natural world is not uſed in a proper but only in a figurative ſenſe.

a conſtant proviſion for the animal part of the creation; and which kind proviſion gives it the denomination of providence. *Secondly*, God, at the creation, called into being various ſpecies of *animals* to inhabit this globe, and placed in them *appetites*, and *paſſions*, and *ſuch* a degree of *intelligence* as was ſuitable to their ſtate, and ſufficient to anſwer the purpoſes of life to them; which appetites, paſſions, and degree of intelligence peculiar to each particular animal, conſidered ſimply as an animal, was intended to be, both the *ſpring* and *principle*, and the *rule* and *meaſure* of action to it; and as ſuch may be ſaid to have been the *law* of its being. God has alſo, ever ſince the creation, *continued* the various ſpecies of animals by a conſtant and proper production; and has *continued to them* the ſame appetites, paſſions, and degree of intelligence as was originally given to each ſpecies (with ſome variation as to individuals ariſing from their different cauſes in nature); by which means the *original deſign* of the *creation*, as to the animal part of it, has been conſtantly and uniformly carried on. *Thirdly*, God, at the creation, made *man*, and made him to be the *chief* or *principal inhabitant* of *this globe*, by placing in him not only appetites, paſſions, and a

degree

degree of intelligence which he had in common with the reſt of the animal world; but alſo by placing in him the affection of *benevolence*, to diſpoſe him to purſue the good of his fellow-creatures; and likewiſe by endowing him with ſuch a *ſuperior* principle of intelligence as conſtituted him a *moral agent*; that is, man was originally endowed with *ſuch a degree* of intelligence as, when properly applied, rendered him capable of diſcerning the *natural and eſſential difference in things*, and the *rule of action* that reſults from that difference, which rule, he, as a moral agent, ought in reaſon to have governed his behaviour by; and as ſuch it was to him the *law* of his being; God having put it into his power, and left it to his choice whether he would act *agreeably with*, or *contrary to this law*; and this conſtituted him an accountable creature. Or it may be expreſſed thus, man was originally endowed, not only with appetites and paſſions which were intended to be, (when moved by objects from without,) motives to action to him; and a principle of activity to be the immediate cauſe of action in him; but he was alſo endowed with *ſuch a degree* of intelligence as, when properly applied, rendered him capable of diſcerning the eſſential difference betwixt *right* and *wrong*,

good and *evil* in a *moral ſenſe*, (except in difficult and complex caſes, in which he was liable to err, and to act wrong in conſequence of ſuch error, and which his wiſe and kind creator was diſpoſed to make all equitable allowances for); to which principle of intelligence his appetites, paſſions, and active principle were intended to be *ſubjected*, it being qualified and conſtituted to be be the judge whether, and how far his appetites and paſſions ought to be the *ground* and *reaſon* of action to him. Man being thus excellently conſtituted he was well qualified, and thereby it became his duty to *cooperate* with his *maker*, by purſuing and carrying on the general and primary end of the creation, *viz.* a *common*, and a *moſt extenſive good*; but ſtill, as a free-being, it was left to his choice whether he would virtuouſly purſue that end, or viciouſly oppoſe it; and by his choice, and ſubſequent behaviour in this reſpect he rendered himſelf the *proper object* of reward or puniſhment in futurity. And as man was thus originally conſtituted, and thus endowed; ſo God by his general providence has *continued* the ſpecies, and has *continued to them*, through all generations, the ſame capacities and endowments as were given to our *firſt* parents, (ſome few individuals excepted, which exceptions,

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it may be fairly preſumed, have had their cauſes in nature, and were the produce of the ſame general providence); by which means the *general* and *primary end* of the creation has been conſtantly, and perpetually purſued by the creator, ever ſince he called this world into being; and it has likewiſe been *virtuouſly purſued* by ſome of our ſpecies, and *viciouſly oppoſed* by others, as it hath been all along left to their choice to do one, or the other; whereby they have, by the *law* of their being, been rendered *accountable* creatures, and the *proper objects* of reward or puniſhment in futurity, as they have rendered themſelves deſerving of either. This, I think, is moſt apparently the true ſtate of the caſe, notwithſtanding what weak, or deſigning, or enthuſiaſtick perſons may have ſaid to the contrary. And ſuppoſing the account of the fall of man, (as it is called,) as related in the book of Geneſis be taken in a literal ſenſe, it will not alter the caſe; becauſe our *firſt* parents acted a *very weak* part in the ſtate that is uſually called their ſtate of *perfection*; tho', I think, it may as well be called their ſtate of weakneſs and imperfection, as their behaviour plainly ſhewed. It is true, our *firſt* parents were *innocent* when called into being, as indeed it could not have been otherwiſe, it being

impoſſible for them to have been blamable *antecedent* to their exiſtence, or that their *beginning to be*, (in which they were wholly paſſive,) ſhould make them ſo. But then, this has been the caſe of *all* their poſterity. And tho' man when called into being was innocent; yet he was not only *capable* of and *liable* to contract guilt to himſelf, but it was alſo *great odds* that he would do ſo in *ſome* inſtances. Man is a compound creature, made up of various appetites and paſſions, which appetites and paſſions when moved by objects from without, become ſo many excitements to action in him; and thoſe excitements are capable of being *greatly heightened*, by thoſe circumſtances that may attend the caſe. And tho' he is endowed with a principle of diſcernment, by which he is in the general qualified to judge when, and how far thoſe excitements ought to be the ground and reaſon of action to him; yet, *ſometimes*, his appetites and paſſions are *ſo ſuddenly affected* as that he is hurried on to action before his *attention* is called in, and thus he is, ſometimes, *betrayed* into folly. And as this is the caſe of all our ſpecies; ſo it is great odds but *every one* will act wrong in ſome inſtance or other. And as this was the ſtate and condition of man, from the *very beginning* of his being, as in fact

fact it has plainly appeared to be; ſo his ſtate and condition muſt have been *perfectly known*, and *juſtly conſidered* by his maker; and therefore we may be well aſſured that God *from the beginning* was not diſpoſed to be extreme in marking every thing that he ſhould find to be amiſs in his creature man in order to puniſhment, but on the contrary he would make all equitable allowances for every diſadvantage man ſhould lie under from his conſtitution, and his circumſtances in the world. For to ſuppoſe that God is the *author* of man's being, that he gave man that *very conſtitution* which rendered him not only *liable* but alſo *likely* to do amiſs in *ſome* inſtances; and likewiſe to ſuppoſe that God from the beginning required and expected that man ſhould maintain his innocence in *every inſtance* or otherwiſe incur his higheſt diſpleaſure, this laſt is a moſt *unreaſonable*, and therefore a *groundleſs* ſuppoſition; becauſe it ſuppoſes God to have required from man, upon very ſevere terms, what could not, (all things conſidered,) have *reaſonably* been expected from him, ſeeing it was *great odds* that the caſe would be otherwiſe in *ſome* inſtances, as I have already obſerved. If a man, in the *general courſe* of his actions, behaves *properly*, and in thoſe inſtances in which, (by temptations that

ſurround him on every ſide,) he is drawn away from his duty, he is *ſenſible of*, and *ſorry* for his miſbehaviour, and makes his miſcarriages a *reaſon* to himſelf to watch againſt thoſe temptations for time to come, ſuch a man muſt be approved in the ſight of God; becauſe he does, (when all things are taken into the caſe,) as well as can *reaſonably* be expected from him in his circumſtances. And this muſt have been a *part* of the ſcheme of God's general providence *from the beginning*, ſuppoſing him to be a righteous and equitable governor of the intelligent and moral world: I ſay, this muſt have been the caſe, notwithſtanding all that our ſyſtem writers in divinity may have ſaid to the contrary; becauſe were the caſe to have been otherwiſe, God muſt have acted unworthy of himſelf, and unſuitable to his moral perfections, which cannot have been the caſe, and therefore is not to be admitted. It is likewiſe true, our *firſt* parents, when called into being, were in a ſtate of *maturity*, and had the full exerciſe of their intellectual faculties, and in this reſpect they may be ſaid to have been in a ſtate of *perfection*, which cannot be ſaid of their poſterity, who are *firſt* in a ſtate of *childhood*: but in all other reſpects they ſeem to have been very much upon a *level*, abating the difference that has

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ariſen from the different circumſtances that have attended them. We at this day appear to be endowed with the *ſame* faculties and powers that our *firſt* parents were endowed with; and they were liable to be miſled, and were actually ſo by the *ſame* temptations that we have been, tho' thoſe temptations may have been different, and may have had a different influence, on account of the different circumſtances that may have attended either. And as the human conſtitution, in the general, has *continued the ſame* through all generations as at the beginning; ſo its faculties have not only been *capable* of being *extended* or *contracted*, or in other words *ſharpned* or *blunted* to ſeveral degrees, but alſo this has been the caſe *in fact*; that is, the human powers have been extended in ſome inſtances, and contracted in others; which extenſion and contraction may have been *more*, or *leſs* general, and may have been of *longer*, or *ſhorter* duration, according to their different *cauſes*, or *occaſions*; that is, according to the different *applications* of men, or the different *circumſtances* that may have attended, either *individuals*, or the various *collections* of mankind.

This has been the work and buſineſs of God's general providence, in which he has

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acted the part, and fully ſhewed himſelf to be the moſt ſkilful projector, and the beſt executor of the moſt noble of all deſigns, *viz.* a *common* and *moſt extenſive good*; by introducing *ſuch* a conſtitution of things as has *anſwered* the *intention* in all its parts, thro' all generations. This was ſuch a conſtitution of things as abundantly ſhewed the great creator to be, what he muſt needs be, *viz.* the *beſt* of all beings. It is true, that the *vitiated* affections of men have given occaſion for a *multitude* of evils both natural and moral to have taken place in the world; but then it muſt have been ſuppoſed from the beginning that this *would*, or at leaſt *might* be the caſe. For as man, according to his original conſtitution, was made a free being, it muſt have been left to his *option* whether he would *honeſtly uſe*, or *wickedly abuſe* the powers he was intruſted with, the conſequences of which were the *evils* referred to. It is alſo true, that in the courſe of God's general providence abundance of *natural* evils have taken place, beſide what have been introduced through the weakneſs and vitiated affections of men, as by ſhipwracks, inundations, and the like; but then it muſt likewiſe have been ſuppoſed from the beginning that thoſe evils *would*, or at leaſt *might* take place, as they would,

or might neceſſarily follow from the natural world's being conſtantly and uniformly ſubjected to thoſe *laws* by which the ends of *God's* general providence were intended to be perpetually carried on. And to ſuppoſe it had been better that *this world* had never been, than for it to have been under ſuch circumſtances; is the ſame as to ſuppoſe it had been better that the art of *navigation* had never been diſcovered, than that being diſcovered a few individuals ſhould have become ſufferers by it.

By a particular providence, I think, is meant a particular and ſpecial *interpoſition* of the *Deity*, in the production, or prevention of ſuch effects upon this globe as are *above*, or *beſide* the ordinary courſe of nature, or of thoſe *laws* by which the world is governed, in the courſe of God's general providence; and therefore could not have been produced, nor prevented by nature's ſtrict adherence to thoſe laws. Thoſe productions and preventions are the ſame, (I think) as thoſe that are called miraculous; and therefore may, with equal propriety, be called by the ſame name; whether they are the produce of the immediate agency of God, or of any other inviſible agent appointed by him for that purpoſe. Again,

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A particular providence comes under a two-fold conſideration, as it is conſidered to be *more* or *leſs extenſive*. *Firſt*, by a particular providence, ſome perſons intend, that God upon ſome *extraordinary* occaſions, and to anſwer *great* and *good* ends does immediately interpoſe, and by his power *produce*, or *cauſe* to be produced ſuch effects as would not be produced in the courſe of his general providence; or by *preventing* ſuch effects as otherwiſe would be produced by the ſettled laws of nature were they left to take their courſe. As thus, ſuppoſe a comet in its return from the ſun were to croſs the atmoſphere of our earth, and God, by an immediate interpoſition of his power, ſhould *turn it* out of its *natural courſe* to prevent the terrible deſtruction that otherwiſe would be the effect of it; this would be an inſtance of the *particular* and *ſpecial* providence of God; and ſo in all like caſes in which, upon extraordinary occaſions, and to anſwer ſome great and good ends the Deity in a particular and ſpecial manner interpoſes by producing or preventing ſuch effects as are neceſſary to anſwer thoſe purpoſes, and which would not have been *produced* nor *prevented* in the courſe of his general providence. Again

Secondly,

Secondly, by a particular providence, ſome perſons intend, that God does not only upon ſome extraordinary occaſions in a particular and ſpecial manner interpoſe as aforeſaid, but alſo that he very frequently and almoſt perpetually does ſo in the affairs of the world. Inſomuch that a man cannot eſcape any danger, eſpecially if it be conſiderable, nor partake of any conſiderable good, without the immediate and ſpecial interpoſition of the Deity. Neither can a boy careleſsly clit the hair of his head, which clitting will occaſion the pulling ſome off in the combing, nor wantonly kill a ſparrow, without the immediate and ſpecial interpoſition of God to lead him to thoſe actions. So that in this view of a particular providence, God is made a *party* not only in almoſt all the *good*, but alſo in almoſt all the *evil actions* that take place in the world. And

As a particular providence comes under the *two* forementioned conſiderations; ſo, I think, it is not the former, but only the latter of theſe that is controverted among Chriſtians; or at leaſt it is the latter of theſe only that admits of a diſpute with regard to me. That God, upon ſome extraordinary occaſions, to anſwer ſome great and good ends ſhould immediately interpoſe

to

to bring about ſuch events as are neceſſary to anſwer thoſe purpoſes, which events would not have been brought about in the courſe of his general providence is a ſuppoſition that does not appear unreaſonable to me; and therefore I have no objection againſt it. But that God ſhould be *frequently* and almoſt *perpetually* immediately interpoſing as aforeſaid, is a ſuppoſition that is greatly unlikely in itſelf, it is void of proof, and is grounded only on mere preſumption, and therefore may juſtly be diſputed. I have already obſerved that God in the courſe of his providence makes an ample proviſion for the inhabitants of this globe, and that by his continuing to govern the ſeveral parts of the world by thoſe ſettled laws that he *firſt* gave them, he continues to purſue the general and primary end of creation, *viz.* a *common* and a *moſt extenſive good.* I have alſo obſerved that the original conſtitution of things has anſwered the creator's intention in all its parts through all generations, excepting in ſuch inſtances and caſes of which it muſt have been ſuppoſed from the beginning that it would, or might be otherwiſe; and conſequently this conſtitution of things has not ſtood in need of ſuch perpetual *patching* and *mending* as the ſcheme of a particular providence

providence that I have now under conſideration ſuppoſes. The whole frame of nature, as under the direction of God's general providence, ſhews abundantly the great benevolence, the wiſdom and power of its author; whereas the ſcheme of a particular providence here referred to ſuppoſes him to have been *greatly defective* in one, or other, or all of theſe. This ſcheme of providence ſuppoſes the original conſtitution of things to have been ſo *badly* put together as that it has required the *conſtant* and *ſpecial* attendance of the Deity to new regulate and amend it ever ſince. This ſcheme of providence ſuppoſes God to have been doing by *nature* what ſome men have been doing by *religion*, namely, he has been continually turning it *topſy-turvy*. God has been perpetually working *miracles* to keep the ſyſtem of nature in *tolerable* order. He has been continually watching here and there, and has been conſtantly and immediately interpoſing to bring both *evil* and *good* upon his creatures. This is the repreſentation that *ſome* men make of the divine conduct; and theſe are the *compliments*, if I may ſo ſpeak, they are conſtantly paying their maker. But then this is all grounded on mere *preſumption*, and is void of *proof*, as I have already obſerved. For As

As to thoſe facts that are conſidered as *eminent* and *apparent* inſtances of God's immediate and ſpecial interpoſition as aforeſaid, they ſhew no ſuch thing. Thus if a man was to paſs by an houſe that by a natural decay was ready to drop, and that houſe was to fall immediately after he had paſſed by it, his eſcaping that danger would be conſidered as an *eminent* and *plain* inſtance of the particular and ſpecial providence of God; whereas, all things conſidered, nothing leſs than a *miracle* in controuling the laws of nature, (either by haſtening the fall of the houſe before its time, or by ſome other way,) could have brought that evil upon him which he is ſuppoſed miraculouſly to have eſcaped. Again, tho' the *wind* at ſometimes, and in ſome parts of the world does frequently and ſuddenly ſhift and change its quarter; yet if any great good or evil is immediately introduced thereby, this is conſidered both as an *eminent* and an *obvious* inſtance of the particular and ſpecial providence of God. Thus in *November* 1688, by the *ſhifting* and *changing* of the wind the *Dutch* fleet (that brought over to *England* the then Prince of *Orange*, our great Deliverer from popery and ſlavery,) was happily preſerved from the danger it was in, by

reaſon

reaſon of the *Engliſh* fleet that was then in the purſuit of it; and this event has been conſidered as an *eminent* and *evident* inſtance of the particular and ſpecial providence of God, without any juſt or ſolid ground to build ſuch a preſumption upon. For if it be ſuppoſed that the people of *England* at the revolution were better, and more worthy of the divine care and protection than the people of other countries, and therefore God immediately interpoſed in their favour, whilſt the people of other nations have been neglected by him when in like dangers; or if it be ſuppoſed that Proteſtantiſm is more precious in God's ſight in *England*, than in the neighbouring nations, (where many, many *thouſand*, mens lives have been ſacrificed for its ſake, which is what *England* has not had to boaſt of,) and therefore God immediately interpoſed for its preſervation in *England*, whilſt it has been, in that reſpect, neglected by him in other countries; I ſay, if theſe ſuppoſitions are admitted, the queſtion then will be, what *juſt* and *ſolid grounds* we have to build thoſe preſumptions upon? And the anſwer, I think, is moſt apparent, *viz.* that we have none at all; eſpecially if it be conſidered that the event referred to might have been brought about, and for any thing

we know to the contrary was brought about in the courſe of God's general providence. The caſe is the ſame with reſpect to all thoſe events that have been brought about by *ſudden* and *unforeſeen* accidents or circumſtances that have preceded them; theſe have been conſidered as *eminent* and *obvious* inſtances of the particular and ſpecial providence of God, whilſt there have been no juſt nor ſolid grounds to build ſuch preſumptions upon. And,

As the facts that are uſually referred to in the preſent caſe, do not in the leaſt prove what they are brought to vouch for; ſo much leſs is the point proved by any thing which our Lord Jeſus Chriſt has ſaid touching this matter. I ſhall not take notice of every text which may be urged in favour of ſuch a particular providence as is now under conſideration, but only of *two* diſcourſes of our Lord upon which the abettors of this doctrine ſeem chiefly to rely. *Matthew* vi. 25. to the end of the chapter. *Therefore I ſay unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye ſhall eat, or what ye ſhall drink; nor yet for the body, what ye ſhall put on: is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment: Behold the fowls of the air: for they ſow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns;*

yet

ye your heavenly Father ſeedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his ſtature. And why take ye thought for raiment? Conſider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they ſpin. And yet I ſay unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of theſe. Wherefore if God ſo clothe the graſs of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is caſt into the oven, ſhall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, ſaying, what ſhall we eat? or what ſhall we drink? or wherewithal ſhall we be clothed? (for after all theſe things do the Gentiles ſeek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all theſe things. But ſeek ye firſt the kingdom of God, and his righteouſneſs, and all theſe things ſhall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow ſhall take thought for the things of itſelf: ſufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. As this diſcourſe was written many years after it was ſpoken by our Lord; ſo, probably, through a *defect* of *memory* in the *Hiſtorian*, what our Lord ſaid immediately before it, which introduced it, and was made the ground or reaſon of it was *forgotten*; and therefore

was not related by him. This diſcourſe, as it now ſtands in the hiſtory, begins thus. *Therefore take no thought for your life*, &c. which words ſuppoſe ſomething to have been ſaid before, to which they were related, and from which they follow as a *conſequence* or *concluſion*; whereas the words that immediately precede them they have no connection with, nor dependance upon. Verſe 24. *No man can ſerve two maſters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or elſe he will hold to the one, and deſpiſe the other. Ye cannot ſerve God and mammon. Therefore take no thought for your life*, &c. Here I obſerve, that tho' a man cannot ſerve God and Mammon; yet it does not follow that therefore he ought to take no thought for his life; the latter of theſe propoſitions does not follow as a natural conſequence, or as a juſt concluſion from the former; and therefore, as I ſaid before, the Hiſtorian muſt have dropped that part of our Lord's diſcourſe which immediately preceded the diſcourſe I now refer to, and which was made the ground or reaſon of it. However, the deſign of this diſcourſe of our Lord, *(imperfectly* related by the Hiſtorian,) appears plainly to be this, *viz.* to warn his diſciples and followers againſt

an *anxious* and *needleſs* care and ſolicitude for the things of this life, when no good purpoſe can be anſwered by it. This is an inſtance of the weakneſs and folly which too too often takes place among men, by which they increaſe and multiply troubles to themſelves. It is true, that many natural evils take place, as they are the reſult of the preſent conſtitution of things, man being ſo conſtituted as that he cannot partake of pleaſure without being liable to pain. But then, a wiſe man will take care not to multiply thoſe evils, nor trouble and perplex his mind about what may never happen; he will be no farther ſolicitous about the things of this life, than as that ſolicitude is neceſſary towards the attaining the conveniencies and comforts of it; and this is that *wiſdom* which our Lord here adviſed his diſciples and followers to make themſelves maſters of.

Verſe 25. *Take no thought for your life, what ye ſhall eat, or what ye ſhall drink; nor yet for the body, what ye ſhall put on: is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment.* In this verſe are *two* things to be conſidered. *Firſt*, the advice and counſel given by our Lord: *Secondly*, the argument he uſed to render that advice efficacious upon the minds of the people.

The advice is expreſſed in theſe words, *take no thought for your life, what ye ſhall eat, or what ye ſhall drink; nor yet for the body, what ye ſhall put on.* The argument uſed to back this advice is expreſſed in the following words, *is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment.* Firſt, as to the advice, it is to be obſerved, that thoſe words *take no thought for your life* are not to be underſtood in their *utmoſt latitude*, but are to be limited and confined to all *anxious* and *unneceſſary* thoughtfulneſs for the things of this life. Man is a creature who depends, not only upon the bountiful hand of providence for his ſubſiſtence; but alſo he depends upon his own application and induſtry for the partaking of thoſe benefits that God in the courſe of his providence has prepared for him. So that it is ſo far from being *blameable* in a man to take all proper and neceſſary thought and care for the things of this life, that on the contrary it is his *duty* ſo to do. But then, this thought and care is not to be extended beyond its *proper* bounds; it muſt lead a man to plow and ſow, that is, to make uſe of all proper means for the procuring the comforts, and guarding againſt the evils of life; and when that is done there he muſt ſtop; he muſt

muſt not needleſsly perplex and diſtreſs his mind about *futurity*, about what *may*, or *may not* happen, about evils that are wholly out of his power either to prevent, or remedy; he muſt do his own duty, and leave the event to providence, it is God that muſt give the increaſe. The thoughtfulneſs therefore that is here prohibited, is not ſuch as is neceſſary towards the procuring the conveniences and comforts of life; but it is ſuch an unneceſſary and anxious thought and care for the things of this world as anſwers no good end, but is in itſelf a *ſore evil*. Having conſidered the advice, I come *ſecondly*, to take notice of the argument uſed by our Lord to render that advice efficacious upon the minds of his people. *Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment.* Which is the ſame as if he had ſaid, hath God in the courſe of his providence given life and being to us, hath he given us bodies naturally expoſed to want and neceſſity, and will he not in the courſe of his providence provide whatever is neceſſary for the ſupport of both? yes ſurely. All unneceſſary thoughtfulneſs for the things of this life is therefore *blameable*, and ought to be *avoided*, as it reflects great diſhonour upon the common parent of mankind.

Verſe 26. *Behold the fowls of the air: for they ſow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they.* In this verſe our Lord purſues the argument mentioned in the preceding verſe, by appealing to experience and common obſervation for the proof of it. Behold the *fowls* of the *air* which are free from all thought and concern for futurity, and therefore make no proviſion for it; they neither ſow, nor reap, nor gather into barns; and yet God in the courſe of his providence makes proviſion for them; and will he not much more do ſo for you, who not only are to uſe your own induſtry, but alſo are intended to act a better part, and to anſwer a more noble deſign in the creation than they? And the anſwer to this queſtion is here ſuppoſed and implied, *viz.* that he moſt certainly will.

Verſe 27. *Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit to his ſtature.* Our Lord here uſes another argument to back and inforce the advice that he had before given, by obſerving that the thoughtfulneſs he condemned was fruitleſs and vain, that it anſwered no good purpoſe, that it makes no alteration in the caſe to which it is applied, but leaves things juſt as it finds them; and

therefore

therefore ſuch thoughtfulneſs ought to be diſcarded; *which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his ſtature.*

Verſes 28, 29, 30. *And why take ye thought for raiment? conſider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they ſpin. And yet I ſay unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of theſe. Wherefore if God ſo clothe the graſs of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is caſt into the oven, ſhall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?* Our Lord in theſe verſes reaſſumes the argument he had before uſed, taken from the Divine providence, to diſſwade his followers from that unneceſſary thoughtfulneſs he condemned; and as he had before applied it to the caſe of *food*; ſo he here applies it to that of *raiment*. And why take ye thought for raiment? conſider thoſe inanimate creatures the *lilies* of the field, that contribute nothing towards the *continuation*, or the *ornament* of their being; they grow, tho' they neither toil, nor ſpin; and yet ſhew forth more real *beauty* than *Solomon* in all his glory could do. Wherefore if God, in the courſe of his providence, ſo clothes the *lilies* of the field, that are to anſwer an *inferior purpoſe*, and that are to continue as it were

but

but for a *day*, ſhall he not much more do the ſame by his creature *man*, whom he hath deſigned to anſwer a much *nobler end* in the *creation*, and to have a much *longer* continuance in it than they? And the anſwer to this queſtion is alſo here ſuppoſed and implied, *viz.* that he moſt aſſuredly will.

Verſes 31, 32, 33. *Therefore take no thought, ſaying, what ſhall we eat? or what ſhall we drink? or wherewithal ſhall we be clothed? (for after all theſe things do the Gentiles ſeek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all theſe things. But ſeek ye firſt the kingdom of God, and his righteouſneſs, and all theſe things ſhall be added unto you.* In theſe verſes our Lord repeats the advice he had before given his diſciples againſt all unneceſſary and anxious thoughtfulneſs and care for the things of this life, and to render that advice efficacious he farther obſerves, that the things of this world are not the *principal*, much leſs the *only objects* of man's care, that God is to be conſidered not only as the *common parent*, but alſo as the *governour* of the intelligent and moral world, who will call man to an account for his preſent behaviour, and deal with him according to his deeds whether they be good or evil; that

that therefore man's *chief* concern and regard ſhould be, not what he ſhall eat, and what he ſhall drink, and wherewithal he ſhall be clothed (like thoſe inattentive Gentiles who conſider this world as their all); but to *approve himſelf* to God in well doing, by putting on ſuch a temper of mind, and ſuch a behaviour as will render him the ſuitable and proper object of divine favour; and when he has done this, and likewiſe has uſed his own induſtry towards the ſupport and continuation of his being, then as God knows the *wants* and *neceſſities* he is liable to, ſo he has, and will in the courſe of his providence make a *plentiful proviſion* for their ſupply; and this has generally been the caſe in fact.

Verſe 34. *Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow ſhall take thought for the things of itſelf: ſufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.* In this verſe our Lord again repeats, and therewith concludes the advice he had before given againſt all unneceſſary thoughtfulneſs and concern for the things of this life; and in order to render this advice ſucceſsful he farther obſerves, that all our care and concern for the morrow will not *leſſen* to-morrow's burthen, that the morrow will unavoidably bring its *own* cares and troubles notwithſtanding all

our

our thoughtfulneſs about it to day; and that therefore it muſt be great *folly* and *madneſs* in us to load the *preſent* day with the cares and troubles that belong to the morrow, ſeeing every day brings with it a burthen of cares ſufficient for itſelf; *ſufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*

In this diſcourſe the *principal* argument uſed by our Lord to diſſwade his diſciples and followers from all anxious and unneceſſary thoughtfulneſs about the affairs of this life, is that God, in the courſe of his providence, *has*, and *will take care* of all theſe things. And the queſtion ariſing from hence is *what that providence is* which our Lord here refers to, whether it be the *general* providence of God, or whether it be an *immediate* and *ſpecial* interpoſition of the Deity. And the anſwer is moſt apparent, *viz.* that God feeds the fowls of the air, and clothes the graſs of the field, not by an *immediate* and *ſpecial* interpoſition of his power, but by his *general* providence; by which *general* providence he alſo takes care of *man*; and conſequently that the providence here referred to by our Lord, was not any particular and ſpecial interpoſition of the Deity, but only the general providence of God. Again,

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The other diſcourſe of our Lord which the abettors of the forementioned doctrine of a particular providence appeal to as a *full proof* of their point, is contained in the 10th chapter of St *Matthew*'s Goſpel, and more particularly verſes 29, 30, 31. *Are not two ſparrows ſold for a farthing? and one of them ſhall not fall on the ground without your father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many ſparrows.* In this chapter we have an account that after our Lord had called unto him his *twelve* Diſciples, and had given them power over unclean ſpirits to caſt them out, and to heal all manner of ſickneſs and diſeaſes among the people, he ſent them forth to preach in the cities of *Iſrael.* And, (ſay the abettors of the aforeſaid doctrine) for the Diſciples comfort and encouragement in this work, our Lord in theſe verſes aſſured them that God would take them under his *immediate care* and *protection*, that his *particular* providence ſhould watch over them and direct their affairs, even in the moſt minute circumſtances: ſo that nothing ſhould befal them whether *good* or *evil* without the particular and ſpecial providence of God. That as a *ſparrow* could not fall to the ground without the *immediate* direction of God's providence, and

as

as the *hairs* of mens heads are all *numbred*: ſo much leſs would any thing whether *good* or *evil* befal theſe his Diſciples in the diſcharge of their duty without the *particular* and *ſpecial* interpoſition of the Deity. This is the *ſenſe* that ſome men put upon theſe words of our Lord, and this is in part the *foundation* upon which their doctrine of a particular providence is built. Whereas our Lord in this diſcourſe is ſo far from leading his Diſciples into a *reliance* upon the *particular* and *ſpecial* interpoſition of the Deity in their favour in the exerciſe of their miniſtry, (excepting in one caſe only, *viz.* what they ſhould anſwer when they ſhould be called before governors and kings for his ſake,) that on the contrary he ſeems to put a *bar* to it, by obſerving to them, that every thing would be *left to take its courſe*. That as they would have to do with *unreaſonable men*; ſo they muſt expect *unreaſonable uſage* from them; the conſequences of which would be that they would be brought before *governors* and *kings* for his ſake, that they would be perſecuted from *city* to *city*, and that they would be expoſed to *ſuffering* and *death*, without giving them the *leaſt hint* that providence would be engaged either in *preventing* or *removing* thoſe evils. That they were not to expect *better uſage* from the

the world than he had, and ſhould meet with from it. That they ought to *go on* and *perſevere* in the work and buſineſs he had called them to, and *couragiouſly* bear the burthen that ſhould be laid upon them on account of it, and not *draw back* in the diſcharge of ſo weighty a truſt. And that they muſt not *vainly expect* that God would be working miracles in their favour; but on the contrary they muſt uſe their *own care* and *endeavour* to guard againſt thoſe evils that the faithful diſcharge of their duty might expoſe them to.

Thus verſe 16. *Behold, I ſend you forth as ſheep in the midſt of wolves: be ye therefore wiſe as ſerpents, and harmleſs as doves.* As Chriſt's Diſciples were to put on the *innocency* of the *dove*, that ſo they might not be injurious nor hurtful to others: ſo they were to exerciſe the *wiſdom* of the *ſerpent*, in order to guard againſt the evils they might ſuffer from them. Verſes 17, 18. *But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will ſcourge you in the ſynagogues. And ye ſhall be brought before governors and kings for my ſake.* Verſes 21, 22, 23. *And the brother ſhall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children ſhall riſe up againſt their parents, and ſhall cauſe them to be put to death. And ye*

ſhall

ſhall be hated of all men for my name ſake. —— *But when they perſecute you in this city, flee ye into another.* Verſes 24, 25. *The diſciple is not above his maſter, nor the ſervant above his lord: it is enough for the diſciple that he be as his maſter, and the ſervant as his lord: if they have called the maſter of the houſe Belzebub, how much more ſhall they call them of his houſhold?* Here we ſee that as our Lord informed his Diſciples what *ſore evils* were likely to befal them, in the exerciſe of their miniſtry: ſo he charged them to uſe their *own endeavours* to guard againſt thoſe evils, but does not give any intimation that the particular and ſpecial providence of God would be concerned either in their prevention or removal. And

Tho' our Lord endeavoured to *comfort* and *encourage* his Diſciples in the work and buſineſs he was going to employ them in; yet that conſolation and encouragement was to ariſe, not from any *promiſe* of the particular and ſpecial providence of God to attend them in *this world*, but from that *great recompence of reward* that would moſt certainly follow them in the *next*. Verſes 26, 27. *Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered that ſhall not be revealed; and hid that ſhall not be known. What I tell you in darkneſs,*

darkneſs, that ſpeak ye in light; and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the houſe tops. Which is the ſame as if he had ſaid; Tho' you will have *many enemies*, and tho' their miſchievous deſigns will ſometimes be carried on with the *utmoſt ſecrecy* againſt you; yet fear them not, becauſe there is nothing ſo ſecret but what is perfectly well known to *God*, who as he will in due time render to ſuch your enemies the *due reward* of their *evil deeds*, ſo he will *abundantly recompenſe* your *faithful ſervice*. Go on therefore in the diſcharge of your duty, and deliver *publickly* and *plainly* to the world, what I have, and ſhall deliver unto you. Verſe 28. *And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the ſoul; but rather fear him which is able to deſtroy* (or make miſerable) *both ſoul and body in hell*; and conſequently is alſo able to make both ſoul and body happy in heaven. Verſes 29, 30, 31. *Are not two ſparrows ſold for a farthing? and one of them ſhall not fall to the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many ſparrows.* As much as if our Lord had ſaid, *ſparrows* are of *little value*, ſeeing *two* of them are ſold for a *farthing*, and the *hairs* of a man's head are *leſs valuable*; and yet theſe, little as they are,

come within the *Divine* notice and inſpection; there is not any thing that can *befal* them, but what is clearly perceived, and fully known to *God.* Fear ye not therefore, for as ye are of much greater value and concern in the creation than ſparrows: ſo you may be well aſſured there is not any thing that you can *do*, or *ſuffer* in the diſcharge of your duty, but will be *regiſtered* in God's book, and will be *kindly remembered* to your advantage. Your *good works* and *ſufferings* will not only be known and obſerved by your maker; but alſo will be *amply rewarded* by him. Verſe 32. and ſo on to the end of the chapter. *Whoſoever therefore ſhall confeſs me before men, him will I confeſs alſo before my Father which is in heaven. But whoſoever ſhall deny me before men, him will I alſo deny before my Father which is in heaven. Think not that I am come to ſend peace on earth: I came not to ſend peace, but a ſword. For I am come to ſet a man at variance againſt his father, and the daughter againſt her mother, and the daughter in law againſt her mother in law. And a mans foes ſhall be they of his own houſhold. He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me: and he that loveth ſon or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his croſs, and followeth after me, is not*

not worthy of me. He that findeth his life ſhall loſe it: and he that loſeth his life for my ſake ſhall find it. He that receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that ſent me. He that receiveth a prophet, in the name of a prophet, ſhall receive a prophets reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man, in the name of a righteous man, ſhall receive a righteous mans reward. And whoſoever ſhall give to drink unto one of theſe little ones, a cup of cold water only, in the name of a diſciple, verily I ſay unto you, he ſhall in no wiſe loſe his reward.

Here we ſee, that the *encouragement* and *conſolation* that Chriſt's Diſciples were to draw to themſelves from his diſcourſe was to ariſe, not from any *promiſe* of the particular and ſpecial providence of God to attend them in *this world*; but only from that *great recompenſe of reward* which would moſt aſſuredly follow them in the *next*. Their comfort and encouragement was to ariſe, from their being aſſured that their *labours* and *ſufferings* ſhould not be in *vain* in the Lord; this was to *encourage them* in the faithful diſcharge of their duty, and this was to *comfort them* and *bear them up* under all the afflictions and ſufferings that the exerciſe of their miniſtry might expoſe them to. And,

As the doctrine of a particular providence that is here referred to, is not *taught* by our Lord in either of the diſcourſes beforementioned: ſo much leſs is it taught in any other part of the hiſtory of his life and miniſtry. Chriſt has not in any of his diſcourſes laid a foundation for any ſuch doctrine to be built upon; and therefore, I ſay as above, that this doctrine is grounded on mere preſumption, and is void of proof. But then, by a particular providence, I do not intend that God upon ſome extraordinary occaſions and to anſwer ſome great and good ends immediately interpoſes and by his power produces, or cauſes to be produced ſuch effects as would not be produced in the courſe of his general providence; or by preventing ſuch effects as otherwiſe would be produced by the ſettled laws of nature were they left to take their courſe; this is ſuch a particular providence as I have no objection againſt, and therefore have not oppoſed. But by a particular providence, I mean, that God does not only upon ſome extraordinary occaſions and to anſwer ſome great and good ends immediately interpoſe as aforeſaid; but alſo that he very frequently and almoſt perpetually does ſo in the affairs of the world; this is the doctrine

doctrine of a particular providence that I oppoſe, and of which I ſay, that it is grounded only on mere preſumption, and is void of proof.

F I N I S.

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